

Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter, Snape, Bill or Tonks... Mmmm Tonks...

## Chapter 0 Burning

Harry opened the small cage door with a squeak. His snow white owl hooted gently before flying out to hunt. Harry set his trunk down with a heavy thud before sighing. His room was not used in over eight months and had the customary layer of dust he found every time he returned from Hogwarts School of Witch Craft and Wizardry. The scarred boy leaned against the small desk across the room from his bed and repressed a sneeze from the kicked up dust. The last magical Potter looked over his shoulder. The window was wide open and allowed the small secondary bed room to have much needed ventilation. Harry eyed the trunk wearily. He did not like thinking about the amount of work he was given regardless of the fact he just tested for his OWLs.

Harry walked to his bed and let himself fall on it. Sirius' death replayed in Harry's mind and he grimaced at Luna's words that crashed into the memory. His mind wandered before it finally drifted across the prophecy. In a strange way, Harry was glad that he knew his fate. "It doesn't matter anyway. Voldemort will still come after me." Harry gave a long exhale. "I just need to focus and survive until I can repeat the victory my mother gave us."

It was oppressively hot outside and Harry felt tired from the mid-morning heat. His mind wandered about his fate and his mind drifted to sleep.

Harry felt like he was floating on air. Heat wrapped him like a blanket.

Approaches...

as the seventh month dies...

while the other survives...

Harry looked in front of him and gasped. Voldemort stood silently watching him. His cold calculating eyes pierced Harry's soul. Harry

shivered before staring back refusing himself to be intimidated. "You made me Voldemort." Voldemort smiled. The dark lord moved slightly as to gesture, 'what of it?'

Harry glared at the man who represented his fate. "I will fight you with every fiber of my being. You will fall!" Harry screamed the last few words while charging at Voldemort. The powerful wizard simply smiled before he shattered into a thousand pieces of glass. Harry looked at him before gasping again. This time the warm blanket turned into an oven. The teens body felt heavy and he collapsed to the ground. His hands shredded from the broken glass from the mirror Voldemort was looking at him from. Harry ignored the oppressive heat and pulled a shard of glass from the palm of his hand. He was surprised there was no blood, but the emotion was forgotten when the shard of glass still held the reflection of Voldemort. Harry crushed the glass in his hand and the overwhelming heat burned. And consumed.

-O-

The wizard on watch as part of Harry's security detail apparated to his house when he saw the wards go off. The ward was a warning system to notify when there was magic occurring inside the house. It allowed Harry some peace for himself and the Order of the Phoenix to continue their monitoring while doing other tasks.

The Order member looked at the window to Harry's room. There were several flashing lights. The man tilted his head allowing his hair to fall off his shoulders. He finally rubbed his head before disappearing with a slight pop. Another accompanying pop could be heard inside the room. After several minutes the flashing lights faded and the window was opened by the Order member. He swore a little loudly and rolled his eyes when he heard the shouting of the Dursleys. Smoke emptied from Harry's room and the Order member could be heard speaking with the irritable family.

-O-

Harry woke not long after the ache in his back faded. He heard rattling from the kitchen downstairs and wondered suddenly who was

working in the kitchen. He felt the sun hit him and his mind just puzzled over it until he realized he had slept the evening and night away. It had to be morning for the sun to peek through his window. He felt a gust of cool wind before standing to close the window. It was definitely morning. Harry thought to himself.

Harry passed the bathroom and saw the clock say it was nine a.m. It was unlikely it was Petunia, she would have left for her morning tea with friends. Uncle Vernon would likely yell for him to cook before considering going into the kitchen. Dudley might have thought of cooking once or twice, but would likely just complain to Petunia that he was hungry.

Harry gaped at the person in the kitchen. "Tonks?"

Tonks was wearing Aunt Petunia's pink apron that was nicely pressed over her Auror robes. The metamorphmagus had her hair matching the apron, and was busy cooking eggs. "Wotcher Harry." Tonks didn't look up from her frying pan and nudged the oven open revealing baked potatoes. "I got here a little while ago, and kicked out your relatives, they were ready to call the fire department."

Harry paused a moment to think on what she just said. When she was not giving anymore information he finally asked. "About what?"

Tonks placed the eggs on two plates and dropped one potato on the plates for each of them. Tonks hummed to herself before saying "Bill spotted a lot of light coming from your room early this morning. He apparated into your room and almost got himself burnt."

"Bill?"

"Weasley."

Harry let that sink in before asking. "There was a fire in my room?" Harry thought back to his room. After a moment he realized it did smell a little like ash. "What happened?"

"That's what we are unsure about. Dumbledore said for me to wait to see if you can tell us something. Bill had almost had to call for help.

The fire was scorching the floors and the walls." Tonks set the plates on two place mats, one in front of her and one on the other side of the table. She waved for Harry to sit and he promptly did so. "The fire was coming from you. You were sleeping on your bed and the fire swirled from you. When you didn't wake up right away... Bill had to make sure you didn't cause anymore damage. Sorry about that."

Harry looked at her and read between the lines. He stared at her before realizing why his head was sore. "He stunned me didn't he?"

Tonks smiled sheepishly. "It worked. Eat, I know you're hungry." Harry satisfied his curiosity about his sore body and smiled at her reply. With a clattering of silverware, they both started eating in peace. When they were done Harry began to wonder where the Dursley's were, they should be making a ruckus since Tonks was here cooking. He was about to ask when Tonks spoke. "They left for the day. The Order is paying their way for a small day get away. Harry, can you remember anything about last night? Dreaming or anything?"

Harry looked at her confused before he realized she might be referring to his scar. Harry subconsciously tugged a tuft of hair over his scar. "I didn't have a scar dream. I really didn't have a bad dream either. But it was different." Tonks waited while he thought about the strange dream. "It was like I was talking to a picture of Voldemort." Tonks looked alarmed before Harry just waved her off. "I told you, the dream wasn't caused by him. My scar would be throbbing if it did." Tonks looked at his scar through his thick bangs before she nodded in satisfaction. "I felt as if there was nothing else but me and that image of him." Harry stopped while trying to find the right words. His voice almost broke when he said, "There really is something special in my link with that man. But that doesn't mean I am like him. I know I mourn my losses. I felt Voldemort's glee when he kills.." Harry shivered to himself before he looked at Tonks. She did not look at him, but rather concentrated on eating even while listening. "Tonks do you believe in fate?" Tonks looked at him. "I don't know if I do or not. But I do believe that my life started and ended with Voldemort when he killed my parents. It will end or restart when I meet Voldemort again." Harry meekly returned to his food and ate silently. When the silence returned to a somewhat comfortable air, Tonks let go of her gaze of him.

The Auror thought of saying something to the boys musings, but let him to his thoughts. She stood up quietly and took his plate while thinking over what he had just said. She gave herself an irritated look. She was just glad she was facing away from Harry. No, I refuse to get him involved.

“Well, you are ok now.”

Harry grunted while thinking about his dream. It started like he was reciting the prophecy. He felt warm. In his mind, Harry could see the picture of Voldemort staring back as if he was a reflection of a mirror. Harry glared at the man thinking of his resolve...

“HARRY!”

Harry jerked out of his thoughts and looked around him. The floor was smoking and the tiles in the kitchen carved out lines in a swirling pattern around his chair. “How?” Harry looked at Tonks slightly scared.

“What were you thinking about Harry?”

“My dream. I was trying to replay it. I was aware of me just thinking about it before I started thinking about charging Voldemort.”

Tonks looked at him. “Well let me clean this up.” She had her wand already out and was fixing the kitchen to its pristine condition. “I want you to not think about that dream until I speak with Dumbledore.” Harry gave her a dubious look but nodded. Harry still was irritated that the Headmaster did not give him any answers that could have helped him over the year.

Tonks smiled and waved before she left with a pop. Harry looked around the room. It was clean, but still smelt like ash. He scratched his head and decided to clean. The Dursleys would likely be angry about the whole waking them up too early thing. It would probably help him if he started to clean. With that thought in mind Harry went to the bathroom and took out the cleaning supplies intent on cleaning the whole bottom level of the Dursley household.

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That evening in London, a large office still had its light on after working hours. The lone man poured over his notes and papers looking at new legislation. One of his old rivalries kept pressing for a new change in his favorite policy that he had been championing for his whole administration. The man looked up when he felt a draft and sighed at the window. He had not noticed it was open until the wind blew against the shades. He looked back down to his notes and started looking at the next proposal. His head jerked up again when two loud slams echoed in his room. He saw the window shut tight and the door to his office closed as well. He stood and looked around. His office was empty save for him. He opened the door to his office and looked out into the hall. "Is anyone there?"

"Behind you Minister." The man gasped. He turned around back into his office and saw a man sitting on his desk. The man's bleached skull mask reflected the ceiling light. The glare made the Minister look away and he noticed the gun in the mans' hands. The masked man held a gun awkwardly as if he never touched one before.

"Who are you?"

"I am someone who has come to see you in person." The man looked at the small portrait behind the Minister. He laughed amusedly when the picture looked at the intruder in shock recognition before running off frame.

The Minister saw the picture too. "So you are one of them? The deathsomethings?"

"I am a Death Eater. Yes." He bowed his head. "My lord has decided to cut off support at it's source." The man pointed the gun at the Minister. "If it makes you feel any better, if you had been a wizard minister, I would have voted for you." The man pulled the trigger.

The bullet landed right at the Ministers' throat. He struggled for a moment on his knees before he fell completely to the floor and died. The assassin tried to cast a spell in the room and was rewarded with

a small stream of sparks from his wand. Satisfied that the wards protecting the Minister of Britain were down, he sneered at the muggle weapon before he transfigured it into a quill and threw it against the door. It stuck straight out at a right angle. He smiled knowing only Aurors would know of its significance as a transfigured murder weapon. The man apparated from the office now that the wards were down.

The man reappeared in front of a mansion. It was already completely dark and the neighborhood would not notice a strange masked man appearing out of nowhere. The man walked swiftly to the main hall and entered the chamber room. He knelt in front of his lord. "It is done my Lord." The man took off his mask and his hooked nose and permanent sneer looked back at his master with patience.

"I expected nothing less from you Severus." Voldemort turned his slit gaze to the silver haired man glaring at the kneeling assassin. "Are you satisfied that Severus' cause is our own?"

Lucius glared one more time at the potions master before turning to his Lord. "Yes my lord. Please forgive me in my lack of faith. I only question his loyalty as a loyal Death Eater." Lucius bowed low.

Voldemort smirked at the display. No one willing to take a knee in his presence was a person he would question the loyalty of. He looked at the silver haired man and remembered when he recruited the upper class pureblood. "Be thankful for your years of service Lucius. You have already been punished for your lack of faith once as well as for your overestimation of your own strength. I will not see it again." Voldemort waved a lazy hand to dismiss the two.

Severus stood and walked out the hall. He was stopped by a gripping hand against his elbow. "Don't let this set back make you think I have given up on proving you are a traitor Snape." Severus returned the glare with a cool gaze.

"You are nothing Lucius. Our master trusts me. I do not need to prove my worth to the likes of you. You who needs your fortune to escape prison, or needs to find faults in others for your own failures. Your debacle in the Ministry was your own doing. Not mine. Be a Death

Eater and admit that you were at fault.” Severus broke his elbow away and stalked down the hall to the entrance of the house where he apparated away.

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A/N: This really is more of a prologue than a true chapter. Chapter one needed this information, but with the way the story was written so far, there was no place to write it in. Which is why I posted another chapter of my Naruto story to get your 10k word fix. I'll see you all next chapter. It is a real chapter, I promise. 10k words.



## Chapter 1 Letters

The clouds had been gathering and threatening for over two days. It was of course today of all days that the clouds decided to break, dropping inches of water down on the town of Surrey. Many children complained about the weather and sheltered themselves inside away from the cold and powerful winds that rattled the windows of the small community. No one dared leave their house this day. But there is always the exception to the rule. This time it was in the form of a single young boy. Although it could be argued he was now a young man after all he experienced before his sixteenth birthday. The destruction of his family and last living connection to what he had believed to be a family, made the young man wonder what he was doing in his life.

Harry Potter sat on the roof of his Uncle Vernon's home and watched the water pour down the roof tiles and through the gutters that he had cleaned that morning. The brush had fallen to the ground and Dudley Dursley, who was his only living cousin, had knocked down the ladder and went inside. Harry didn't mind the rain. It was a lot nicer than the constant pounding of nails he had to hear when he fixed the fence in the back yard the day before. And the rain was a more than welcome distraction than the dreams he had at night. Harry felt his mind begin to wander to the dream again and pressed down the emotion. He knew that so much of the anger he had felt in the past year was not his but rather Voldemort's own personality leaking through the scar. It was the reason why Headmaster Dumbledore would not see the prophesized boy in person. It did not help when he remembered the reasons why he suddenly kept thinking of his new resolve.

Harry shook his head letting his soaked mop of hair fly in every direction. His hair soaked up the water and now was the only time he had ever seen his hair lay flat against his skull. He sighed thinking that even his hair did not have the energy to defy gravity and spike the way it usually did.

Harry suddenly felt the water stop raining on his head. He looked up and saw the grinning face of a young auror smile at him. She was holding a purple and yellow spotted umbrella and had a toothpick dangling out of her mouth. "Wotcher Harry!" Harry smiled weakly.

Tonks nudged his back with her knee. "Let's get you inside. We don't need you to be sick while being stuck here right?"

Harry blew out a breath of air. He stood up woodenly and Tonks jumped off the two story house and grabbed a hold of the rain drain and slid down to the ground, gripping the pipe to slow her descent. Harry smiled at the woman. When on land, she was the clumsiest person he had ever met, but get her started doing any kind of acrobatics and she could navigate like a seeker through a forest. Harry thought it had to do with her being so aware of her body as a metamorphmagus. Harry looked down to the ground. She looked back up to him while putting away the umbrella and making sure her toothpick didn't fall out of her mouth. When it did, she swore and pulled another from her pocket. Harry's weak smile changed into a real one with a hint of a laugh. He had seen more of her in the past few days than any other person any summer in his entire life aside from visiting the Weasleys. Tonks knelt to get the ladder to help Harry when he walked to the edge of the house and swung down the roof and adeptly grabbed his bedroom windowsill before letting go and landing in a deep crouch. Tonks just glared at him and Harry smiled. "What? You don't think that was the first time I was trapped on top of the roof did you?" Harry patted her on the back and they both went inside.

Tonks stopped him just inside the door and cast a drying spell on each of them for which Harry was grateful. He was not keen on cleaning the hall and stairs up to his room again. He had gotten enough when Uncle Vernon found the state of his room after a rather violent 'trance'. Harry led Tonks into his room to inspect the place. There were scorch marks along the walls that she began to fix and the bed itself had a small spiraling circle of burnt blankets. Harry reddened when his laundry basket was turned over and saw a pair of his only decent fitting underwear were burnt. Tonks didn't say a word when she fixed them. Finally when the room was completely to the level where Harry deemed normal, Tonks sat on his desk and Harry took his seat on the bed. Tonks surveyed the work she did and smiled. "It looks like it is getting better; there wasn't nearly as much damage as last time."

Harry sighed but nodded. Ever since his return to the Dursley's, he had started to damage what ever was around him magically when he began to think of the prophecy or the strange dream that repeated itself every night. The first time it happened was the night after Harry returned from the train station and went strait into his room. The Dursley's were miffed that they were threatened but took the warning to heart and left Harry alone when he stayed in his room. Harry had a dream where he found his own resolve to fight Voldemort. When he awoke he had learned that he had incidentally caused the room to catch fire.

Tonks fixed the kitchen the second time it happened and reported the event to Dumbledore. Harry and the headmaster exchanged careful words by owl and a member of the Order would come by once a day to check on his room and repair it if the need arose. The results from the short communication between the headmaster and Harry was that Tonks took it upon herself to make sure he was doing ok and visited him whenever she had a chance. The Dursley's looked at his bedroom once after a 'trance' and promptly ignored him, honestly afraid of what would happen if they had angered the unnatural boy they housed.

Harry looked to Tonks and then fell back on to his unnecessarily small bed. Tonks eyed the small bed and said, "Are you sure you don't want a bigger one? I know I can fix this room up in tip top shape."

"It's fine Tonks, I am used to it anyway. Does Moody still want me to send those blasted letters?"

Tonks grinned. "Yes, but saying that you are alive with homicidal tendencies isn't what he had in mind when he said for you to owl the order."

Harry nodded and looked at his owl who eyed the storm wearily. It was obvious she did not want to fly out in that. Harry smiled and said, "Can you just tell him for me this time? Hedwig looks like she will seriously hurt me if I send her out in this." Tonks smiled and nodded. She got off his desk and stretched.

"I'll be by to check tomorrow. If you need anything make a mental note to ask me later. Bye!" Tonks apparated with a quiet pop. Harry sighed. He knew that he should get some of his problems off his chest, but he didn't feel a desire to share it with someone who knew Sirius as well as Tonks did. It was kind of her to offer, and truth be told he was glad she did. He was just not looking for blind sympathy that he would get from talking about it. Harry had not been surprised from the lack of owls from anyone and silently thanked who ever was watching over him that no one constantly asked how he was feeling. He knew he was feeling numb, but he did not mind. After feeling anger for an entire year, the void of feeling anything helped relax him.

Harry went down to the kitchen noticing that while he was up on the roof he had completely missed dinner. He stopped when he had one foot into the kitchen and saw his Aunt Petunia sit quietly with a cup of tea. They had not spoken a word when he returned. Harry raised his eyebrows and realized that even Dudley did not say a word directly to him. Dudley never treated Harry differently but he would not try and goad the wizard at all. Harry sighed for small favors. Petunia snapped out of whatever she was thinking and looked to the boy that was her nephew. She looked at his hair and clucked disapprovingly.

Harry ran a hand through his hair and felt that it was matted from the rain. While his hair was dry it was a worse mess than usual. "I will be in and out Petunia. Just need to get myself something to eat."

Petunia returned to staring at her tea. Harry wondered at that. She never usually drank tea so late in the evening and usually watched the telly with Uncle Vernon and her Dudders. Harry opened the ice box and found a chilled dinner plate there. He looked up to his aunt and she looked at him intently. "May I have the plate of food?"

Petunia snapped out of whatever she thinking and sneered out. "It is yours. If you had come in on time you could have eaten it warm." Harry sighed at the comment. It wasn't that he did not mind or care what his Aunt and Uncle or even his cousin thought of him. It was more of the fact that it was getting old. It was something else he felt like not wanting to fight against. It was not worth the effort.

Harry finished his meal and went to bed. The next few days rained and Harry was seriously tempted to go back to the roof and relax. It was nice to feel the rain hit his body and was a far cry from the confines of being in his claustrophobic room, where Harry sat at the moment. The rain was only a slight drizzle and a thick haze wrapped around the town. Dudley was over at his friends and his Aunt and Uncle left for a lunch. They had conveniently forgot that their nephew needed to eat. Harry shrugged it off. The latest owl he had received was a small letter that Sirius never finished, but Professor Dumbledore felt that Harry should read it. He smiled at the letter and tucked it away before his head began to spin again. He ground his teeth and forcefully thought to not let go of his magic. He felt his breathing turn ragged and the tiles beneath him turned slightly hot before the heat finally faded. Harry sighed. If he could get a few more warnings, this wouldn't be so bad.

-O-

Tonks entered the old house with a smile on her face. "Hey Weasley, what's up?"

Bill was going over sealed vaults that needed to be open for Gringotts. "Hey gorgeous, just finishing this up. The rest of the Order is here. I think we are just waiting for Albus."

Tonks nodded and kissed his forehead before going into the new meeting house of the Order.

It was another seven minutes before Albus arrived and the Order was seated. "I called this meeting to allow Severus to give his report on Black Manor."

"After we evacuated the manor, it was a week before Kreacher returned with Bellatrix Lestrange. She claimed the house, and it readily responded to her as its new master. Voldemort is using it as a safe house for his death eaters. As I am able to say it out loud it is not under the fidelus charm either. But it's now heavily fortified."

There were several sighs at the information. "At least we were able to remove all of the dark artifacts we were able to find." Severus nodded in agreement with Minerva.

"But that didn't stop Kreacher from showing her a hidden vault that held many more dark artifacts."

Albus was disheartened at the news and the outbursts from the other Order members was silenced at his glance.

"Two days ago I was able to silence Kreacher before he was able to divulge any more information about the Order, including my identity as a spy." The Order's reactions were wide from relief to indignation for killing a house elf.

"Very good Severus. Has there been any repercussions from Kreacher's death?"

"It looked like he finally died of breaking his oath, no matter that he went to work for another Black. There was no hint of foul play but I think Voldemort is suspecting me or at the very least one of his men is not trusting of me. I will have to start divulging more of these meetings Albus, if I want to remain a spy." Albus nodded in agreement.

"I believe that there was nothing further pertaining to the missing dragons?" The Order turned to the only Weasley in the group.

"Charlie has only contacted me once since the last meeting. The family is down there under the guise of a vacation while Mom and Dad are looking into it. Charlie himself had to send home a third of his staff now that twelve of the ninety dragons on the preserve are missing."

Albus looked to the Weasley and nodded. "Was there any more information that you would like to share?" He asked the whole group. There was a negative response. "Very well, we will reconvene when there is any new information. Thank you." The group was dismissed and Tonks went up to give her report.

Tonks playfully saluted and said, "Everything is fine on the Harry front. He actually didn't have a trance today but yesterday's has shaken him up. He still feels he should not leave his room. At least he goes to the bathroom to bathe." Albus gave a slight smile at the joke.

"Has he made any mention that he wanted to leave as soon as possible?"

Tonks smiled and shook her head. "Nope, I think he is actually happy to get away from the rest of us if you know what I mean."

Albus nodded sadly. "Thank you Nymphadora. And thank you for taking so much of your time out to do this. Becoming his friend is not something I would ask anyone to do. But you have gone far out of your way for Harry." Albus bowed his head slightly. Tonks was surprised by the old man. He was not usually so solemn when she gave her reports. Tonks accepted the thanks at face value. She left the Order's new headquarters and made her way home. It didn't bother her that she was being friends with someone who was seven years younger than her, and in truth it was like having a little brother. But the way Dumbledore said his thanks was almost like he had no right to say anything to Harry at all. That can't be right. They were both friendly when she saw them last summer and they owed each other the day after Harry got back.

Tonks just let the subject drop when she spotted Bill cooking dinner for her. She grinned. "How did you get in?"

"What? You don't think a professional curse breaker can pick a simple lock?" He grinned back. "I found where my missing trinket went. I want to show it to you. Do you want to go with me to get it tomorrow afternoon?" Tonks just grinned widely.

-O-

The prisoner did not know of this building and knew immediately this was not his lord's domain. The pale skinned man raised his head and resisted the urge to sneer at the monster that stood over him. He had vaguely remembered leaving the new safe house. But anything after that was still a blur. "What do you want half breed."

The burly man laughed again. "Nothing from you I am afraid. I am just doing a friend a favor."

The captive grinned evilly. "My lord will come for me. He will come and kill you and every last one of your family."

The man growled out a feral laugh. "I think not Severus. You are here because of your lack of faith."

Severus's grin disappeared. He snarled out. "I have been nothing but loyal to my master! Who are you to judge me, half breed!" Severus did not need to recognize the signs of a werewolf. The sagged blue eyes, irregular canine teeth, the slightly dilated pupils were normal signs of lycanthropy. But the potions master did not need these, he could easily smell the monster for what he was.

The werewolf simply punched him and Severus knew nothing more, which was fortunate as the man continued to beat his unconscious body.

-O-

The morning started early for Susan Bones. She felt more energetic than usual. After moving around the house aimlessly she picked up the paper and read the front page. "Hey Ami, look at this. It's another article on Harry." Susan Bones tucked a strand of her red hair behind her ear while looking into the kitchen.

"What does it say?" Her aunt Amelia Bones called around the half opened door. Susan smiled at the sound of chopping and she stood carrying the Daily Prophet with her.

"It's saying that there was a break-in at the Ministry. Voldemort was spotted. 'Harry Potter was sighted and fought he-who-must-not-be-named.' It then goes on about how Harry is some great wizard. In the end it says Minister Fudge has conceded that he had to lie about the return of Voldemort to keep the panic of the community to a minimum."



Amelia snorted. "That's rich. He had almost made me loose my job when I said we should start looking into Albus Dumbledore's information." Amelia scraped the sliced fruit into a crust and rummaged through the cupboard.

Susan hmm'ed for a moment. "So what happened? You know, right Ami?"

Amelia smiled at her niece. "Harry Potter took a few of his friends with him to find someone who was important to him. He was given reliable information that the man was kidnapped and the information was used as bait to lure the boy to the Ministry."

"Who was it?"

Amelia stopped fixing her pie and turned to her niece. She bit her lip for a second before saying. "His god father Sirius Black." Susan gasped before covering her mouth. Amelia waved for the teen to calm down. "Sirius was an innocent man sent to Azkaban. With no proof he could not be placed on a proper trial to see him cleared. Albus had spoken with me at least once a month trying to find a way to excommunicate Sirius Black. It's a moot point now since he is dead. He died in the ministry fighting his cousin who killed him."

Susan listened and lowered her head with finding out the innocent man is dead. "Why didn't Harry just get someone to help?"

Amelia laughed. "Who? Professor Severus Snape? Please, there was no one who would listen to him other than the headmaster of that school or that old bird, Minerva. And they were both gone at the time."

Susan leaned against the counter shrewdly looking at her aunt. "You interviewed Harry didn't you?"

Amelia just smiled at her niece. "I might have had to perform a small inquiry."

Susan gave her own snort and looked at the paper again. "You are not going to give me any more information are you?"

"The best truth is the truth you look for yourself. If you are so curious why don't you write to Mr. Dumbledore." Susan slumped her shoulders before she crossed her arms in a pout.

"You don't just go and interrogate your own professors." She glared at her aunt childishly before her eyes perked up. "I'll be upstairs if you need me." Susan ran through the kitchen.

Amelia laughed when her niece was gone. "Really easy to read, that one."

-O-

Harry woke up that same morning and found himself reading the letter Sirius had half finished writing. Harry looked at the parchment. It did not look that old. Harry smiled to himself. If he did not know better he would say Sirius had just written him.

Hello Harry, I just wanted to owl you a letter. I hadn't written in a bit and wondered why you never used your mirror. A few days ago I tried to call you but you must have been away from it. I know its hard staying in one spot and just waiting for what you are expecting to come. I know how it feels being trapped. Just know we are both toughing it out.

Professor Dumbledore has been occupied protecting something for a long time now. I guess he wants to tell as few people as possible. I only know 6 people who know what is being protected. But I think it's only Dumbledore who knows why. Even if I knew more I could not tell you here. Use your mirror to get back to me. It's far faster and it would be good to see you again.

Now that the serious stuff is out of the way, I was talking to Tonks about what we

Harry had read the unfinished letter and had been silently debating on whether he was going to ask Tonks what they were planning. He knew she was grieving as well. Sirius was the only real relative she had.

Harry set the letter down and laid back on his bed. It was still early and his aunt and uncle had just woken up and were milling around the house. "I wonder when Moody is supposed force me to send me another 'check to make sure I am not dead letter?'" He thought idly. Moody did not just want a letter on the exact day but at a specified time. Harry had felt lazy today and did not plan to send a letter until Tonks came by. She could just tell him. Harry smiled inwardly. Tonks would probably get an earful for doing it too.

The rain wasn't helping the tedium of a slow rainy day much with the constant tapping it made against his window. Tap? Harry jerked his head up and saw a small brown owl tap the window again. Harry ran up and let the little fellow in. The owl hooted thankfully and flew to sit patiently on his desk. Harry looked at the owl and recognized it as a Ministry owl. It held a small tag around his neck with the insignia of the Ministry. The owl hooted and moved its leg for Harry to take the letter. Harry looked back to the letter. If it was a ministry letter, it would be enchantment proof at least. Harry looked at the owl that looked back expectantly.

"I guess your expecting a reply? Let me give you some treats while you're waiting." It hooted happily and joined Hedwig at the water feeder in Hedwigs' cage. Hedwig didn't seem to mind. They hooted at each other happily. Harry smiled at the two owls then looked at the letter. "Susan Bones?" Harry raised an eyebrow to the letter. "How did she get a Ministry owl? Why would she even owl me?" He had never had much contact with the quiet Hufflepuff. The times they had spoken, which Harry could only remember a hand full despite five years of going to the same school, were quick and unmemorable. In fact he couldn't even remember what she looked like other than long red hair.

Dear Harry,

I heard from my Aunt that you and some of your friends had gone and broken into the Ministry of Magic and encountered Death Eaters and Voldemort himself. I was relieved to see that you were alright and felt that I should owl you and give you my support with what you did there.

Aunt Ami had always wanted to get that jerk Fudge out of office and this might be the big chance.

I also heard what really happened with Sirius Black and feel awful for you. But from what I heard I am sure he would be happy that you were safe now. I don't know how busy you are over the summer but if you have time I would like to hear from you.

Well wishes,

Susan Bones

Harry looked over the letter and couldn't help but smile. Tonks delivered the news the day before that neither Ron nor Hermione were able to send owls over the summer. Harry understood but it still hurt. If Hermione and Ron couldn't owl him for whatever reasons, he was glad it did not extend to everyone. He read over the letter again and looked at the bird. It hooted, get on with it. Harry began to dig through his trunk for ink and quill. He found it after removing his books from the trunk. The ministry owl hooted impatiently. "I am hurrying already!" Harry said half amused. The impatient owl received a glare from Hedwig for the outburst and looked properly abashed. Harry brought out his quill and ink and found a few leafs of parchment to write on. He smiled at himself when he sat down. "I really don't think this will be longer than a few words."

"Boy! Get down here! You need to make breakfast!" Harry sighed. He didn't want to keep this bird waiting; it did seem to be as impatient as Uncle Vernon.

"I'll be down in a few minutes Uncle Vernon!"

Harry thought for a moment what he would say and how to start before he settled down and wrote:

Dear Susan,

I am glad to hear from you. During the summer I tend not to get many owls.

Harry stopped there and flinched, it sounded like he was replying her as a last resort. After not being able to come up with anything else he decided to leave alone and let the chips fall where they may.

Thank you for the support. I feel horrible for my godfathers death. Everyone says-

Harry stopped again. He suddenly realized that this would be harder than he thought. He didn't want to confide in someone who he didn't know well. Harry sighed. He looked at the amount of parchment he grabbed then finally decided to write down what he felt like saying and if he doesn't like it, he can always trash it.

that's its not my fault, but that doesn't mean I don't feel it. I am glad that you feel what I did was good, but I still have a self doubt. But I know what I am supposed to do now, I can move ahead.

The dream flashed through his head again. Harry shook himself out of the thought before returning to his letter. He had wanted to vent and didn't even know why he wrote this last part but realized it was true. Sirius was dead but Harry finally knew why he now felt so calm about Sirius' death. He felt pain but he didn't know now if it was for Professor Dumbledore not telling Harry things he had a right to know, or that all of that just led Sirius to an early grave. But it led to the fact that there was a purpose that he had to fill. And it seemed Harry could only have learned it after Sirius died.

I hope Fudge gets kicked out for this. It's ridiculous what he was getting away with for the past couple of years. I don't think you knew, but he had tried to get me expelled from Hogwarts for defending myself last year from dementors that had attacked me and my cousin, from Umbridge who had confessed to doing it. The hearing was more like a damn trial. Your aunt thankfully was one of the few people who maintained professionalism through it all. I guess I never really thanked her for that. Susan? Can you please pass the word to her? I appreciate it. I guess I wrote down more than I thought I would have now that I am looking back at this letter. But I don't regret it. Thank you for writing Susan. I think you helped me solve some things I have been having trouble sorting out on my own.

Sincerely,

Harry Potter

Harry reread what he wrote; it was a little personal for him. But Harry decided it was best to confide in someone who was outside of his circle of friends who believed him. Instead of the friends who would just console him blindly. He cooed both owls over to him. They both promptly flew on to his desk.

"Boy! Move it!"

Both owls looked at Harry.

"It's nothing new to me." Harry smiled to the owl who hopped closer to receive the letter. Harry sat there a moment before deciding. "Sorry I don't know your name little guy, but I want to have Hedwig go with you." It looked hurt. "I am sorry, Hedwig is more used to the things that might intercept owl letters. Right Hedwig?" The snowy owl gave an affirmative hoot. "Just for this once, I really don't want this letter to fall into anyone's hands other than Susan's." The small owl finally relented and both owls flew off with Harry's letter in tow. Harry looked down at the letter Susan sent him. He was glad that someone owled him other than the obligatory owl of concern. At least Harry hoped that was the case. Harry sighed and leaned back into his chair. "I wonder if this is another mistake." He felt the doubt climb back into his vision, but knew that there was no way to bring either owl back. Aunt Petunia screeched for Harry to come down and cook her duders some breakfast. Harry grimaced. Of all the things that happened, he was almost glad that there was a kind of normalcy at the Dursley's.

--O--

The squeal of glee reached the whole house. Amelia looked up to the ceiling where she heard thumping of running feet. "AMI! HE WROTE BACK!"

Amelia sighed before returning to her paper work. It was a Saturday and thankfully, she only had another hour of work to complete before

being done. "That's great, who did you write to?" She had an idea, but for her shy niece, it would be a big step.

"To Harry!"

Amelia looked up with lazy eyes with a raised eyebrow. "You really did it? I am impressed."

Susan looked at her aunt with confusion. "What? Why?"

Amelia just laughed. "I guess you don't really know since you go to school with him, but he is Harry Potter. Killer of dark lords, chosen one, hero to all magic folk everywhere... Any hints?" Susan just looked at her blankly. The old woman repressed a laugh. "He is the most famous wizard alive."

Susan stood there frozen for a moment. "He is that famous?"

"You try and raise them right..." She muttered to herself. The woman looked at the child. "Why do you think the papers try and get him on every paper?" Susan bit her tongue knowing she would get in trouble for replying to that. "His name alone will guarantee thousands of prints will sell."

Susan squeaked again before running back upstairs with the still unopened letter. When she arrived in her room she saw her owl Julie sitting on the window sill still looking indignant from her owners' display. Susan saw the other owl. "Oh I am sorry, in all the excitement I didn't notice you." The owl gave a patient chirp although looking quite displeased. Susan reached for her desk and opened the letter, intent on giving her reply.

-O-

The day went by with Harry constantly berating himself for sending that letter. He actually wondered if he was daft for mentioning anything at all. The gardening was about done when the rain started up. Harry thanked whoever was looking after him today and hurried inside before he had to clean up what ever mess he dragged in. Harry tried to remember ever time he spoke to Susan and the only

thing he could really recall were the few times he spoke to her during the D.A.

After a shower, Harry sat at the table glad he did not need to make dinner for anyone other than himself. Petunia received an invitation to the well kept flowers club. Harry idly wondered if it was a ruse to get them out of the house for the Order to pick him up. The door opened with Petunia gushing about being accepted into such a prestigious club. Harry sighed in disappointment. After he cleaned the kitchen he went to his room. Harry gave an honest smile when Hedwig returned that evening with another letter from Susan. He quickly opened it and read,

Harry,

I am glad to know I could help you with sorting stuff out. Even if I didn't know that I did. Aunt Ami said she was grateful for the thanks. I have been really worried with what the prophet has been writing. I don't know if you get it so I put the article with my letter. It's about you and how powerful you are getting. It's a nice little article for Harry Potter fans, but it is these kinds of articles that seem to be setting people up. Aunt Ami thinks so too. Sorry for bringing this up. I am sure you didn't want to know. I am almost tempted to cross this whole part up, but I think you should know anyway. I hate it when people talk behind my back and I know you are the same.

Anyway, I was really happy that you replied. And I was surprised to see you had your owl, Hedwig? Come back with Julie. When I saw your owl there, I had to reply immediately. So I thought of things to say, and realized you probably don't know much about me. This is where I am thoroughly embarrassed for even owling you in the first place. I almost curled up in a ball when I realized it, honest. Then I just sucked it in and wrote back. Well, for some background information about me. I live with my Aunt Ami in London. You already know who that is. I have a small circle of friends who are in Hufflepuff, but they have been getting on my nerves this past year. They just keep changing their opinions about everything, especially when it comes to the Daily Prophet. They are so ready to believe what that damn paper says and if they have to contradict something they had said earlier, my friends say, "Well they obviously can't be right all the



time." Arg, sorry I am getting my self worked up over those idiots. I think that a news paper should have facts not just 'news'. It just angers me the crap that people go through to sell a damn newspaper.

Harry couldn't help but laugh at this point.

"Boy! Quit that racket or I will have you finish up the yard! I don't care if it is too late and raining!"

Harry put his fist in his mouth trying to stifle more laughter when he read the rest of the tirade, the delicate writing of Susan's had slowly morphed into tight jagged scrawls.

What really sets me off though is when the whole school agrees with those idiots. I mean what the hell is wrong with these people! Whew, I guess that has been building up.

I could just scratch this off, but after you wrote something so personal, I can't. I hope you don't think me mad but if you do, at least call me eccentric. That will help when I get hauled off to St. Mungo's. Write back. I'd like to hear from you again.

With honesty and love,

Susan

It took Harry a few minutes to stop laughing and recovered enough to find some more parchment to write a reply. He decided a background would be just as entertaining to her as hers was to him.

Dear Susan,

Thank you for not cutting anything out. And I heartily agree about the papers, and this article about me isn't going to be good. I was thoroughly enjoying your opinions of the Prophet and of people in general.

I don't know how much is published about me so I'll just write you what it's like living with the Dursleys. It's crap. When I was orphaned I was stuck with these people. They really don't like me and I guess

the feeling used to be mutual. Now I don't to waste the energy being angry at them. I have had enough of that.

But there was this one time when I was young that I first got my glasses. My cousin Dudley wanted to take them off and break them. I didn't want him to so for three hours the pudgy kid tried to tear them off my face and they would not come off. He finally got so frustrated he ran home and told aunt Petunia that I wouldn't let him take my glasses off my face so he could crush them. I was feeling smug so I sat and listened. Uncle Vernon was mad so he shaved my head that evening. It was a shock to all of us when it was back to normal the next day. Every single time they shaved my head for the rest of my stay here, it would grow back by the next morning. Its one of those little things that has endeared them to me I guess. Being sarcastic here.

There were a few other times where it was fun being here when I would get a slight retribution through accidental magic when I was younger, but they seem petty now. So I guess my only real joy staying here now is sharing owls with you.

Awaiting for your next owl with a smile

Harry

Harry looked at what he wrote. He thought depressingly that it didn't seem funny like Susan's was. But he decided being honest was easy and important first step in writing the letter. Harry walked over to Hedwig who looked irritated for flying out again, "I am sorry Hedwig, rest at Susan's for the night and you can come back in the morning. I'll save you some extra bacon." She nipped his finger affectionately. Harry wrote quickly at the bottom of his letter.

P.S. my poor owl, I just wanted to send one more letter to you tonight. Can you please let Hedwig rest over tonight and send her back tomorrow? Thank you.

Harry sealed the letter. Hedwig gave another hoot before she left to deliver Harry's letter.

Later that evening Harry was nodding off when Tonks apparated right into his room. Harry screamed in surprise and raised his wand from his desk to the person who stared at him. Harry looked at her and sighed in relief. "Don't scare me like that Tonks, at least apparate outside my door. I don't want you to see me if I am changing or something." Tonks looked at his red face and promptly reddened herself.

"Sorry Harry." Tonks looked around the room impressed. "No trance?"

Harry's glare turned into a look of surprise. He hadn't noticed until she mentioned it but he didn't let his mind wander at all today. "Guess not." He said lightly. He fell back onto his bed and sighed. It was nice not having someone to repair something he had destroyed for a change.

"Oh? What's that?" Harry jerked his head up wincing at the protesting muscle. Tonks was about to reach for the letter when Harry leaped off his bed and snatched the letters on his desk before Tonks touched them.

"Nothing, letters from a friend."

Tonks raised her eyebrows, neither the Weasleys or Hermione would be able to owl him. She looked at his face. He looked away and she caught his blush. "Oh My God! It's a girl!"

"Keep that racket down!"

Tonks looked to the floor below them still giggling. "It is!" She grabbed his shoulders and gave him a bear hug that she only managed since she was still an inch taller than him. "My little Harry is growing up!" She cried dramatically.

Harry scrambled out of her grip and kept his letters behind his back. "Fine, it's a girl. Please keep that to yourself?"

Tonks looked like she wanted to argue but sighed with a glare from Harry. "Fine, but you have to tell me who it is." A twitch of her lip belied any seriousness to her term.

Harry sighed, "Susan Bones."

Tonks nodded and smiled satisfied. "Ok, at least she has Julie."

"Her owl?"

"Ministry owl. Ok if you're not burning down the house I should get going. Sweet dreams Harry." She winked at him before she apparated.

Harry scowled at her exit but went to turn off the light and go to bed. It had been strange that he had not thought of something that didn't anger him. But worrying about those letters was probably the best thing that had happened to him. It never crossed his mind that night that it might have been talking with Susan that had helped.

-O-

Harry's room isolation did not last long. It was a few days that he started doing yard work again. Harry escaped the monotony of house work at the Dursley's by reading Susan's letters every morning and evening. Harry quickly found after the first week, he would need to beg for Hedwig's forgiveness for the frequent trips. He laughed when he would see a disgruntled Julie fly into his room. Susan had said in one letter that she had to do the same. The next week, Susan and Harry had started to up the ante, by writing three to four times a day. They found a way to carry conversations so that it seemed they had talked the whole day and both the Dursley's and Amelia Bones saw the smile that had been on their faces. On the occasion when Hedwig refused to deliver a letter, she actually just left to go hunt, Harry needed to beg Tonks to send his letters and she happily agreed.

It was on one of these little missions that she knocked on the Bones residence. The Bones residence was a large house, too large for only the two ladies, made of brick and wood. The house was old, being

made several generations ago with Susan's great grandfather choosing the plot of land when they moved to England.

The door opened and Tonks smiled at Susan. The girl was looking at Tonks hungrily. "How long have you been waiting at the door Susan?"

Susan blushed and mumbled something that was suspiciously like two hours. Tonks ignored the urge to poke fun at the girl and handed her Harry's letter. Susan hugged the Auror. "Thanks!" Susan didn't even say good bye when she ran upstairs with the letter waving over her head.

Tonks had a few laughs over that before she heard a scowl from the other room. She turned and saluted. "Good morning director."

Amelia waved the title off, "First name is fine when you are in my home Nymphadora." Tonks grimaced but didn't say a word. "I must apologize for my niece. She has been excited ever since she received her first reply letter."

Tonks snorted. "She isn't the only one. Harry begged me to send his letter since both Hedwig and Julie are on strike." Amelia chuckled. "It's a good thing that wizards haven't discovered the telephone, or those two would probably be on it the whole time."

"Don't be thankful yet, I have been petitioning for muggle technology to be slowly integrated into normal society."

"I am crying for joy to see that pass." Tonk's said dead pan.

Amelia smiled widely. "So are most pure bloods."

-O-

Harry smiled at the Dursley's. It was one of those rare moments where he could get away with it. The small family sat quietly in the dining room. They all had felt refreshed from their vacation. Vernon in particular looked as if he lost much of the stress he usually carried with him. With the man's calm discussion turned towards the three's

vacation, Harry turned away from his hiding spot at the door frame to the kitchen. He walked out to the living room and sat down to read. He had performed all the usual assigned work they would give him and then some. The house was clean except for the two bedrooms where Harry dare not enter. The laundry was done, and for the most part folded. The three were still not too trustful of the black haired boy to go through their clothes with out ruining them.

Harry looked up from his book and nodded to himself. They at least now had good reason.

The door knocked and Harry wordlessly went to it and was surprised to see one of the eldest Weasleys. "Hello Bill, I haven't seen you since Christmas."

Bill smiled. "Been busy. Mom had the premarital jitters when me and Fluer broke up. Although I know mom didn't like my ex."

Harry chuckled and opened the door wider to let the man in. "The Dursley's are in the kitchen. I'll be right back and we can head up to my room."

Bill nodded wisely. He had met the guardians of Harry and was slightly displeased with them when he had to check on Harry during the Order's first scare. Harry returned after a few raised voices from Mr. Dursley. Harry left the kitchen with a smile and nodded for the older Weasley to follow.

Bill noticed a few things that he did not see the first time he was in there. The bed was cornered in the wall and stood on three legs and a fourth with the aid of a few books. He looked at them closely and smiled. They were muggle books about house cleaning.

"O.K. this is where I ask you about how you are, and how are the trances?"

Harry shrugged. "No idea. I don't have them that often, but once a day is still pretty uncomfortable. I can feel them coming so I usually try and keep it in here. So there is no real damage except a few

burned planks and some singed bed sheets. Have you guys found out anything?"

Bill was still scratching his cheek wondering how to phrase it. "Well, it sounds like you are describing a magical disease that we find in children. But they usually out grow that by the time they are eight."

Harry looked at the man horrified. "So I-?"

Bill shook his head quickly. "That's what I said it sounds like. But the way your magic is acting is beyond anything kids with Burning Dysfunction have. They show it on their arms and feet and sometimes burn things they touch. You are not hurting yourself as far as we can tell, and it's just things nearest to you. To be honest, we have several medical wizards going through notes and case studies to try and find what is happening to you. But no matches. Congrats, you found a disease."

Harry groaned. Bill grinned at him. After a moment Harry laughed. "Think they can name it after me?"

-O-

Harry sat at the kitchen table waiting for noon to arrive so he would be allowed to make lunch. The Dursleys still had vacation time, and were laughing at a movie they had found playing on the telly. Harry's stomach grumbled. "Come on, ten more minutes and I can touch those pots and pans." Harry stood from his chair at the table and began to pace. His stomach growled loudly at him.

Harry sighed at the noise and looked into the living room. The clock said he still had four more minutes. After that it would easily be twenty more minutes before he could actually eat anything. Harry huffed in frustration before sitting back down at the table and stared at the pots and pans. He practically wished he could just use magic to cook something. Or at least apparate to a fast food place. Fish and chips sounded good at the moment.

Harry gave a smile and a sliver of drool dribbled from his open mouth. Harry stood up again and gave another groan at the clock. It had been only thirty seconds.

Harry went to sit down again laid his forehead against his folded arms. Another gurgle followed along with something else. Harry did not have the time to swear before fire fanned from his body, incinerating the chair. The flames traveled along the floor and stopped suddenly three feet away from the boy. Harry stared at the flames trying in vain to control them. Harry recognized this trance was different from the ones before it. "Petunia!" There was a scowl from the other room and silence. "Please!" Harry's voice was desperate.

Aunt Petunia came waltzing into the room about to reprimand the boy when she saw him on fire. "Get everyone out!" Harry gritted his teeth as the flames spread dangerously to the walls. "Hurry!" Harry fell to his knees while trying to control his breathing. Petunia did not waste time. She ran to the living room screaming at her two boys to run out the front door. Harry swore silently to himself before brandishing his wand. Ministry be damned. Harry thought before raising his wand. "Protego!" He first cast it to the floor. The flames suddenly stopped consuming the floor, but still burnt hard. Several more protection spells later, he was satisfied he was boxed in. With a deep breath he let go of the little control he had and the flames of magic whipped through the room in a large flash before disappearing. Harry let his body lean against the floor panting hard. It was moments later that he knew nothing more.

Harry was aware of several people in his room. He opened his eyes and sighed at being laid in bed again. He stared blankly at the ceiling before turning to the people in his room.

"It is good to see you awake Harry." Tonks ruffled Harry's hair before turning to Bill.

"We fixed the repairs downstairs. And we brought you some dinner."

"How long was I out?" Harry sat up and saw his clothes showed no signs of being burnt again.



"A few hours. It was smart of you to cast those protection spells." Tonks handed Harry his dinner that had been sitting on his desk with a warming charm on it. When Harry flexed his slightly shaky hand he began to eat. Tonks looked at him for a second before starting. "The ministry sent you a few warning owls but nothing that Fudge wants to make a spectacle of. Albus and Moody were actually both at the Ministry when the wards were tripped to send you an Owl. They needed to find why you had not been receiving letters about your trances. The Auror Office said they had not received any spell warnings since today." Harry nodded mutely.

"And the Dursley's? Are they alright?"

Bill grimaced. "Enough to give us an earful when we got here. You had just collapsed when Tonks got here. I was a little behind her."

"I need to stay in this room from now on, don't I?" Bill and Tonks looked at each other. Neither had been given instructions.

"We haven't thought about that actually." Harry nodded while finishing his food.

"Tell the Dursley's that I am going to try and stay in my room as often as I can. Can you make sure everything in here will be protected? This trance..." Harry paused and his eyes looked far away. "It felt like it was apart of something bigger." Bill and Tonks wordlessly nodded.

-O-

Harry slept quietly and only felt a tick from his otherwise dormant scar. In the middle of his dream his body began to stir and his forehead broke into an intense sweat. Harry panted in his sleep and his body began to give off waves of heat.

The ward tuned to the trance's Harry went under blared to life. Immediately Albus loomed over Harry and silently wondered what was happening. He repaired the damage as it occurred, but let the trance continue, Harry had said it didn't hurt. Stopping the trance hurt. "I think we need to let this run is course." Remus Lupin stood next the older man and uneasily nodded. Several more streams of fire snaked

from the bed before being put out. Sweat rolled off Harry's head but the boy still seemed to be sleeping peacefully. Albus waved his wand at the room and then conjured a chair for himself and Remus. "This may take a while."

-O-

"Keep running! We have to clear the anti-apparation ward." The desperate voice behind the group spurred them to go faster. One man dropped his mask and ignored his black robes that almost tripped him.

"We aren't going to make it! It's too fast." Shouted a youth behind him. The teen was suddenly thrown into the air and screamed. The leader of the group slowed to a stop and pointed his wand at his friends robes. "Accio scroll!" The scroll flew out of the monster's hands. The Death Eater tucked the scroll into his robes and caught up to the others who never looked back. They were close to escape.

The group all screamed when the thing that had been chasing them appeared ten meters in front of them. The man like beast snarled and raised its hand. Another Death Eater fell to the ground leaving two. The two ran around the monster and the leader made it past the ward before apparating. The second one was caught in an inhuman grip. The lone Death Eater shook in fear when he felt the wind vibrate from the monsters roar. He looked behind him to see another monster. This one had a head of a bird. It screeched in his ear and the Death Eater felt terror grip him. He fell to the ground and began to beg them to not kill him.

Both monsters looked at each other. Several screeches and growls were exchanged before the monster with the head of a jackal knelt next to him. He grabbed the mans robe and growled. "Tell him it is not his, the book is for the dead." The monster then lifted the Death Eater into the air and threw him out of the apparation wards. The man took a second to realize he could escape and apparated hearing the two monsters screech and growl in laughter.

-O-

Vernon and Petunia stood outside the door to Harry's room. The old man who left the boy in their care was inside. The married couple held each other in support while waiting. They had woken up to wizards surrounding their nephews door. They kept their precious dudders in his room while they braved the group and asked what was going on. Many of the group shook their heads. Every event of seeing the boy burn his surroundings with fire, of seeing the unnatural boy do things that even they define as unnatural, filled the Dursley's with apprehension. The old man finally walked out. The Dursley's could smell burned wood, but saw no signs of fire.

"What happened sir?" Asked Vernon. His voice was steady and he looked directly into the eyes of the old man.

Albus stood there measuring the two. He thought about what he saw and murmured. "We are unsure. We have never seen something like this before. Magic is driven on intention. But the focus young Harry is showing is beyond anything I have ever seen." Albus waved his hand to the other wizards and they walked down stairs and disappeared with a pop. When Albus was alone with the care givers, he looked at them. "You truly are afraid of him now, aren't you?" His voice was low and sad.

Petunia held her breath before she exhaled unsteadily. "I am sorry sir, but this is too much for us. I don't want to think about what would happen if you all weren't here. A fire I saw once took up a whole room in seconds. I don't want me or my family to die in our sleep, or burn alive while trying to escape." Petunia sniffed slightly.

Albus nodded. "One of my people will be with Harry for the next few days while we find a place to send him to where he won't be a danger to any one of you." Albus looked at their scared forms, Petunia shook slightly and Vernon seemed to be standing on will alone. Albus walked down the stairs. At the base he looked up to them. "I thank you for taking him in. You may not have been what I had hoped, but you were less than I feared you would be." When Albus apparated away Petunia sank to the floor and sobbed. She was deeply shaken and Vernon squatted to hold his wife.

Inside Harry's room, Harry sat on the floor in front of his door. His eyes moistened slightly. He would have to leave knowing that his relatives were afraid of him.

Harry looked at his room and understood. The window was open and the smell of ash was slowly leaving. Harry was thankful that the Dursleys did not see the whole room when Dumbledore left. Harry looked at the damage he did in his sleep and shivered. Albus had transfigured the walls to stone while he slept. Where stone stood on all four walls, molten slag sagged and pooled into cooled smooth rock on the floor. His personal things that were not protected for the level of fire for his trance were destroyed with no way of repairing them. Harry felt his body shake thinking what would have happened to the Dursleys had he not been watched over. Dumbledore had woken him up just ten minutes ago, but Harry could already understand it when the headmaster said nothing truly dangerous happened until he was about to wake up. In the kitchen a few days ago the trance happened in a matter of minutes. Harry looked at the ash stone again. "This time, there was no warning. It was just too fast for Dumbledore to react." Remus stood aside while Harry sat against his bedroom door taking in the damage he wrought.

-O-

...I know you want to beg me to tell you about what Donna did to Jeffery when he found out about the affair. Actually it kinda was like how Lavender Brown ended her last relationship with Michael. But there was no hexing involved. Hey! We should have someone make a witch soap opera! Can you imagine if Donna could hex Jeffery's bits off?

Love,

Susan

Harry wiped a laughing tear from his face. He was glad no one was in the house to hear him laugh. It was loud and his chest was aching. Harry tucked away his newest letter from Susan. He found the safest place to put all of his belongings was in his trunk. So his small archive of letters found a nice slot on the back side of the chest to stay safe in.

He had not told her of his problems with his control. It was embarrassing to think about how an almost adult could not control their magic. He knew he should probably owl her that he would be leaving soon and would likely be unable to owl her before seeing her at Hogwarts the next term. He read another part of her newest rant about muggle soap operas before folding the letter. He still needed to write a reply letter. "At least I should have a few days before they get me out of here, its almost my birthday and the Dursley's are gone for the next week. Plenty of time to write and tell her what has been going on." Harry sighed at the excuse. He hated not being honest with himself as much as he hated being honest with himself.

Harry heard a knocking at the door. "Did Tonks finally learn how to use the door?" He stood up and walked out his room content with the disappearing Dursley's. Since Harry had not left the house, they have agreed to leave the house until he was gone. They were currently on vacation again. Harry felt a pang of guilt from enjoying his Dursley free stay in Little Whining. He smiled when he told Susan of their second departure. It started a two letter conversation on what she had done on her vacations. Each story was funny and made Harry more fond of the Hufflepuff.

When Harry opened the front door his smile faded. "Mr. Lupin, Professor Dumbledore, Hi Tonks." He opened the door wider to let the three inside. When they three entered the living room Harry sat on the couch and sighed. "Did you find a place to put me?"

- - - End Chapter 1 Letters - - -

A/N: First real chapter up! Now that we got the story rolling, I just want to tell everyone, that I am posting chapters as I complete one. So there is no schedule this time around. I am only two chapters ahead in writing instead of my goal of four.

## Chapter 2 Dark Mark

Lord Voldemort sat on his couch looking over the scrolls that laid before him in much the same fashion he had years ago as a young man. Several books lay open, hovering in various positions. These books were dangerous even by his standards and were not allowed to touch anything. The curses embedded within them may not kill the lord, but they would provide a great inconvenience to him. The Lord had combed through these books for several clues and had found only one lead. It was why several of his circle had left ten hours ago. They were all over due and Voldemort expected they had indeed found what he sent them out to find. The doors opened with a whispered creak. Voldemorts' crooked smile fell when he saw only two of the five person group enter through the door. The man knelt. "Here my lord. We were able to retrieve the scroll you desired." The Death Eater was sweating and his arm was bloodied. Behind him stood another of his men in tears. He bowed low.

Tom looked at the men in the eye one after another and knew there was more to the story. "Show me what you saw." The men bowed and each felt his mind being looked through. Both Death Eaters thought of the nights events. Voldemort saw for himself the two monsters that had chased his Death Eaters. One of his marks was struck down and the apprentice boy died as well. His Death Eaters confusion was evident through out the attack. When they could not leave right away, to what the monster said in garbled English, was looked at through the eyes of both Death Eaters. Voldemort's interest was raised when he heard one of the monsters speak. Voldemort thought on the now two dead Dark Marks. It was not difficult to replace Karkarov. But to loose others so soon was a surprise.

Tom finally gazed at his followers. "Thank you my loyal Death Eaters. Falden, you and your men have done more than what I expected of you. Anthony, I do not begrudge your lack of composure. Your group was ill prepared for such a confrontation. You may both go and mourn your loss. We will hold a memorial in their honor tonight at a banquet. I will send word." The two men nodded and held back a few tears. Falden's son and friend had been among the Death Eaters and a single apprentice that had been killed on the mission. Voldemort looked to his left while thinking about what he saw. He recognized the

two beasts that attacked his men, they were two avatars for the Egyptian gods. The jackal god Anubis and his son the bird god Horus. "Bring me Rudolphus. I have a few questions to ask him."

The servant bowed low and walked in a trance to find the wizard. Voldemort sneered at the imperio'ed muggle but then turned his thoughts to the deceased Death Eaters. Regardless of Falden's loss, those two marks would need to be replaced. Voldemort thought of the past year and silently agreed with himself. It would require adding two new marks, but the four children he had been working with would yield ideal replacements.

The doors opened silently and Rudolphus Lestrangle bowed low and then raised his head slightly to kiss his lord's hand. "What do you need of me, my lord?"

Voldemort thought on what could possibly cause those two monsters to target his Death Eaters. He had, of course, heard of guardian golems. But to actively hunt those who trespassed and left, was an extreme he never heard of before. Voldemort held the scroll in his hand and saw that Rudolphus' wife walk in. Their Lord and Master waved her to come closer. "Since you are both here I only need to speak of this once. This is of grave importance. Rudolphus you were the expert on Egyptology on our last outing to the south. The scroll we found in Egypt is said to have a curse on it correct?" The man wordlessly nodded his head. "You and I had both removed all of the curses we had found on the chamber and then on the scroll itself." The man nodded again suspecting there was something they had missed. "From your recollection, had there been any kind of information about guardians of the scroll or of the book itself?"

Rudolphus looked his master strait in the eye. "My lord, I did not see a single symbol indicating such a protection. Had there been an incident?"

Voldemort turned the scroll slightly and showed the blood that came from Falden's arm. "We lost three followers to two monsters who looked like Egyptian gods. They mentioned the book. Is it possible that the clerks created a kind of golem that could hunt those who

triggered its trap and is it also possible that the trap was not to protect the scroll, but the location the scroll revealed?"

Rudolphus let his eyes glaze at the problem. "If they had... Master, I can say it would have been a work of art. Such a complicated..." He shivered. "My apologies my lord, but such a spell is beyond anything..."

Voldemort nodded to the both of them in satisfaction. He had thought it unlikely, but if the book had its own wards triggered by first removing the scroll that would lead to the book... "Had we known of these guardians before now, I would have accompanied the group personally." Voldemort was hesitant to open the scroll immediately and set it to the side. After deciding it would be prudent to return to the chambers where they first found the map to the scroll, Tom looked at woman in front of him. "Bellatrix. Tell Falden and Anthony that they are welcome to rest for the remainder of the year. They have done their job well. We three will, from now on, deal with all matters dealing with this book and the guardian curse." The two Lestranges bowed before Bellatrix laughed in excitement.

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Harry watched Professor Dumbledore when the group of three entered the living room. The three guests took seats on the various furniture while Tonks leaned against the TV. The old man moved his hand into his robes and pulled out a letter. "We have created a special room at Hogwarts. As of now, there is no other place to protect you and still function as a place to protect others. In Hogwarts, we could at least allow you the ability to move around with no one to disturb you and I will be able to tell if you had a trance in case you need aid." Albus turned to Remus Lupin who did not seem to like this turn of events. "It is the best option the Order has found... Considering."

Harry nodded. When he looked at Remus he was not sure how to address him. "Was there something you wanted to add sir?"

Remus gave a surprised look before saying. "I had offered to let you live at my home. There are several rooms that are completely



shielded and would likely be a safe alternative. But Albus thought it would be wiser for you to stay at Hogwarts.”

Harry looked at both men before sighing. “Mr. Lupin, my last trance, were you able to react fast enough to it?” Remus stopped what ever comment he was about it give and lowered his head. Harry smiled at him. “I am truly thankful for the offer. But I know somehow that these trances are going to get stronger. I need to ride them out so I can understand them.” He nodded carefully to the Professor. “Let me get my things.” He waved for Tonks to come help and she followed him up the stairs. Tonks looked around the room and whistled. The room was lined with stone and much of the wood was burned from that morning.

“You weren’t kidding about them getting stronger were you?”

Harry looked at Hedwig’s cage. It was behind a stone wall to protect his bird if she wanted to sleep in his room. “Bill tried to repair some of the damage, but the stone is resistant to spells now. Bill spent hours trying to transfigure the cooled rock back into normal walls, he reckoned we will have to remove it and rebuild this part of the house the muggle way.” Harry looked at his room. Tonks went around him and waved her wand at his trunk to float. Harry looked at her and the room. It looked nothing like the room he had at the beginning of the summer. “I am scared Tonks. The Dursley’s are terrified of me. I saw them leave for their vacation and they sped away at my glance from the window.”

“I don’t want to hurt them, even if they had hurt me. And I don’t want to hurt my friends either.” Hedwig flew through the open window after hunting and he stroked her. She felt his anxiety and immediately hooted encouragement. “Go to Hogwarts. I’ll meet you there in a while.” Hedwig hooted again before she took off. When the owl was gone he turned to Tonks. “Any way, can I still owl Susan?”

“You will have to talk to Albus, but me and Bill could probably help send a few if Dumbledore refuses.” She smiled brilliantly.

Harry let a grin escape his frown. “Ok. Let’s get going then.” It was not long before all of Harry’s things were sorted. At the base of the

stairs Harry looked around the house before nodding to the headmaster. Professor Dumbledore pulled out a small card. Harry gave a slight smile at the chocolate frog card of himself. Harry touched it waiting expectantly. When the group were all touching it they each felt the pull of the portkey activating.

Harry arrived and grimaced at the courtyard. It was under kept and it was on the north side of the castle where students rarely went. Albus Dumbledore led the group to the castle wall where the vines and hedges outlined the stone wall in the shape of a tall door. Albus stared at the wall for a few moments before it turned into a door. "Come, the room I have in mind is fine, and I have procured some things in compensation for your... stay." Harry wondered at that before following the older man. The four followed a flight of narrow stairs before the hall opened into a large foyer. The walls had tall stain glass windows and two flights of stairs. Albus turned on his heel to Harry. "This will be your home for the duration of your summer, You are free to wander the grounds as long as you don't leave. I will not be able to sense if you have a trance outside the walls of Hogwarts' fields." Harry nodded. Albus gave a smile before saying. "I would also like to inform you since you are at the school, you are allowed to use magic freely."

"Really?" Harry felt a tinge of excitement.

"Yes, the Ministry does not monitor the castle as it is pointless to do so when children will be regularly using magic here." Albus walked past Remus. The man had taken the moment to stop and look around. "Everything here has been treated to not catch fire. If you should have a trance, you will not need worry about damage. I left three cabinets in your room to protect all of your belongings. You may send my an owl if you have problems as I won't always be on the castle grounds."

Harry nodded. When Albus sighed Harry looked up again. Harry recognized he was about to be told something he wasn't going to like. Albus let out laugh at the situation. "As you could tell, there is a catch to this. Several wizards have asked that you perform tests with your magic to determine what is going on. Unfortunately, I refused to let them see you in person as they don't know your identity. If we can not

have you control or at least understand what is happening I can't allow you to join your class mates this coming school year."

Harry looked up at the man with wide eyes. It never occurred how this would affect him after vacation. He looked at the professor and nodded, not trusting himself to say a word.

Harry set his chest down and looked around while Albus and Remus left. He sat on his possessions while thinking what he should do now. He turned when he heard a cough. "Yeah Tonks?"

She rummaged through her robe pockets before pulling out a leather bound book. "Here." She tossed it to him and he noticed it was kept shut by a leather string. He opened it and was surprised it was empty. "I thought it would help you organize your thoughts better than just doing it in your mind. Albus told the old crone Trelawny that the dream journal assignment you were supposed to have done in your divination class was supposed to help organize that for you, but you never did like that class." She waved before leaving down the hall steps.

Harry stared at the journal now just realizing what the auror just told him. "Still trying to help me while he wanted me to have my life..." Harry stood up and pulled out his wand absently. He summoned a ink well and quill to the table from the chest and walked over to the table while still looking at the blank journal. When he got to the table he noticed that the ink and quill were not there. He glanced at the chest and saw that the bottled ink and quill just barely made it out of the chest. After a moment of confusion he tried to summon the two items again. "Accio quill and ink." The ink bottle flew right at the boys head. Harry's quiditch reflexes save him. The slap the bottle made against his hand shook his arm all the way to the shoulder. Harry looked at the piece of quill to find it didn't even move.

Harry slowly opened his hand and groaned when he felt his good hand was bruised. The sharp outline of the ink bottle was embedded in his hand. "I really am going to have to pay attention to those tests. This could get dangerous."

After he picked up the quill and returned to the table, Harry stared at the finished leather and flipped through the empty pages. He had never written a journal before. Ginny came to mind when he thought of a diary. He shuddered before looking at the journal. After a few moments he started.

Uncle Vernon told me once that we freaks don't know the value of hard work. It wasn't funny then, but I know it's funny now when I remember him saying that. Like the ink bottle and quill I just summoned. After I saw that the spell didn't work once, I tried again and now have a bruised hand for my efforts. I always thought that there were times when the simplest things can be the most complicated tasks with magic, and at the same time the funniest. Just like if I didn't get a bruise on my hand I would think this whole thing was funny. If I was not so self conscious, I admit I would laugh at the many times Ron messed up with his old wand, or the idea that the worlds' most famous wizard is obsessed with lemon drops. I would constantly laugh when Tonks, who can change her body at will, can't even walk down a flight of stairs without tripping once. I know, I've seen her try since the beginning of summer. But that just makes me wonder more, in both worlds, does the oddities balance both sides? Or do we find our own balance in the world we live in?

Harry Potter

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Susan saw Julie return with a letter in her claws and opened the window eagerly. Her smile faded when she found that her letter was returned. "Julie? Did Harry not want the letter?"

Julie Hoot a negative and took off the window sill and flew outside in a circle before flying back. "You couldn't find him?" Susan asked surprised. Julie gave a happy hoot before waiting for Susan to give her more instructions. Susan wondered what happened. "Give me the letter please." Julie produced her foot to untie the letter and Susan thanked her owl before heading down stairs.

"Ami are you still here?" There was no answer and Susan sighed. "She went to work already. Great."

Susan thought of what to do and went to the living room hearth and grabbed some floo powder. She sifted some of it in her hands second guessing herself. It could have been that he was not there, but Julie would have understood that he was just away. Owls rarely return a letter unless the recipient was no longer living there. Susan scowled at the thought of trained Ministry Owls. Sigh, "Julie can only owl to addresses, not to actual people." She threw the powder into the fire place. "Ministry of Magic!"

Susan gracefully walked out of the fireplace and took out her wand to present it to the clerk. "Susan Bones, to see Amelia Bones on personal business." The clerk weighed the wand and wrote a note down.

"You know where to go?" Susan nodded. The clerk waved a dainty hand. "Go ahead then." The older woman went back to her reading.

Susan upturned her nose to the cover of the teen witch weekly. The clerk looked way too old to read something geared towards girls Susan's age. Susan entered the nearest elevator and pressed the floor for her aunt's office. The youngest Bones exited the elevator and looked around to get her bearings. She had only been here twice and both were with her Aunt Ami leading. She finally found the hall she was looking for after a few minutes of back tracking. After a moment of hesitating she knocked on the door that read Director Bones. "This is so stupid, she will probably ground me and send me home." she murmured to herself.

A terse voice answered the knock. "Come in." Susan poked her head into the office. Amelia looked at her niece with surprise. "What are you doing here?"

Susan flushed as she walked into the room and closed the door behind her. "Julie can't find Harry." Amelia Bones perked at the information. She knew of the boys magic problems as she had to speak with Dumbledore about safety regulations for children who have problems with magical outbursts. And what kind of movement would not be said, but she had not expected Albus to move the boy so fast. But just in case...

Amelia stood and walked to her fireplace. She was not informed of anything the Headmaster of Hogwarts would do with his students, and in fairness, any student of Hogwarts was more likely under Albus' protection rather than the Ministry's. "Albus Dumbledore's Office." The fire exploded and faded to a small burn. Amelia moved her head into the fire. After looking around she pulled her head out. "Stay here Susan." Amelia took out a quill and parchment and wrote a quick message before tossing it into the fire to send it into the Headmaster's office. "I'll be right back. I am going to look for Nymphadora."

Susan was too surprised by the quick action to reply.

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Harry woke up and rubbed his head. When he saw his room, he fell back into his bed. His head was killing him. The room whirled and Harry resisted the urge to hurl. He recognized the telltale signs of a particularly powerful trance. For one, he was laying naked in his bed. That only happened only one time before. Right before Dumbledore decided he needed to be moved. The trance burned his clothes off. Another sign was that he had a blanket over him. Harry reddened and prayed it wasn't Tonks who covered him. Those two signs told him it had been at least three days since he passed out. He had just said good by to Bill and went to his room to read. Well, that is the last thing I remember...

Harry sighed. He wished he could go to the Owlery. But he didn't feel keen thinking about what would happen if he had a trance while there. He had promised himself he would write to Susan, but he had been too busy, reluctant to call Hedwig, and then this trance... Harry scratched his head, he missed owling Susan terribly . He sat up and pulled the lamp drawer open and pulled out his journal.

Harry no longer thought of the dream that seemed to have started all of the trances, but he still wrote down anything he remembered while he slept in his journal. When that task was done he groaned at the assignment he had in the room. He pulled the curtains from the balcony and sighed when he saw the door was left open. Three

cauldrons stood on the balcony and all three were scorched from fire and eventual inattention. He pulled them to the bathroom and dumped the contents down the drain after sprinkling inert powder into each concoction. A knock came from his door. "Just a moment, I am up."

Harry yawned and quickly put away the cauldrons and went to the bathroom to wash up. Now fully clothed and cleaned, Harry went down to the common room. Tonks stood there and grinned at him. She waved two envelopes. Harry smiled widely and ran to the auror. Harry reached to snatch them but Tonks playfully pulled them away before giving them to him. "Sorry it took so long. Apparently owls can't find you when you are in this particular room. I don't know when I can return letters tho." Harry nodded before going to the dinning room. He wanted to read the letters now, but thought they would be better if he read them in private.

"Did you speak with Susan?"

Tonks chuckled. "Nope, Director Bones came into the barracks and searched for me for twenty minutes before she found me and gave them to me. But Susan was a little worried from what Amelia said." Harry nodded while beginning to start on his eggs.

"Was there anything exciting supposed to happen today?"

Tonks grinned. "Nothing, Bill is supposed to come by to get me to help him with something. But that won't be until later. Did you want me to help you with that potion you are working on?" Harry choked on his eggs before pounding his chest. He grabbed his glass of water and downed it quickly. His eyes began to tear slightly before shaking his head.

He coughed one more time. "Sorry Tonks, but I threw that out. I woke up from a particularly nasty trance and saw it was worthless from the fire."

Tonks chuckled she sat on the couch and grinned at the teen. "How's the rest of the studies? Still can't cast reliably?"

Harry gave her a weak glare. "It is still not funny, and I know I am behind on those tests those medical witches sent me."

Tonks hmm'ed a moment before she grinned. "How about some flying?" Harry smiled at the thought. Tonks was about to say something else before she felt a small pulse through her middle ring. The gold band glowed two blinks before going out. Tonks looked at the ring grimly. "Sorry Harry, but something just came up. I got to go." Harry looked at the ring but nodded.

"Get going. I am sure it's important." Tonks smiled at him as she ran out the door. Harry exhaled before grabbing his broom. He had not wanted to go back to his cauldron. Anything was better than remedial potions.

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Severus laid on the ground breathing in sharp breaths. His chest was stripped bare of clothes and his legs were covered by barely recognizable black pants he had worn under his robes. During his waking moments Severus had repeatedly tried to apparate out of the cave to no avail. Severus knew what he had to do to escape but he had to first calm the panic his body kept inducing when ever he heard a slight echo from the other side of the door. Severus hated to admit it, but his body felt itself trained to shake at any noise from the opposite side of the hated wooden door.

His torturer had left earlier that day. Severus let his mind wander enough to allow the faintest traces of his subconscious reassert themselves. He slowly and methodically went from muscle to muscle. One finger, then another moved slightly before they stiffened and failed to move further. His left wrist moved gently then the muscles of his forearm contracted before his biceps and shoulder muscles moved in turn. Severus inhaled, ignoring the lasting pain over his body and was glad that he could walk. The question now was if he was able to stand. Slowly he rolled onto his stomach. The Potions Master was thankful his legs were not too damaged but his abdominal muscles screamed at him. His right shoulder slumped forward and his right hand lay at an awkward angle uselessly.



With a slight smirk of victory Severus pulled himself onto his legs and slowly stood up. His legs shook unsure if they would hold his weight. He took several clumsy steps backwards. Severus was thankful that there was a wall to hold him while he let his legs rest. The hooked nose man knew that it was likely he did not have his hidden vial pouch, but there was still hope if his hands could move to the small of his back.

Severus' broken hand gently felt his back and he gave a small sigh of relief when he felt a small bump at the base of his spine. He nudged it gently and the bag expanded and almost fell to the floor before Severus pressed his back to the wall squeezing the bag into place. Severus stretched his unbroken pinky and ring finger into the bag and felt a vial that was cold to the touch. He moved his quivering hand to his mouth and bit into the stopper and drank the icy liquid eagerly. He let the vial drop and let his breathing stay slow. When he opened his eyes, they were instantly more focused. He looked around and noticed the man who had been beating him left at dawn. Severus thought about how much time has passed since he was brought there. He counted twelve days. Severus' eyes widened wondering why he was still alive. His lord knew he was loyal. That left no doubt that someone had tortured him for something else. Severus gritted his teeth and forcefully ignored the pain and pulled out another vial from his pouch. He looked at his broken hand and the vial. Severus knew he would never be an expert dueler like Rudolphus was, but Snape more than made up for it with his survival skills. Severus tossed the vial at the door where the vial shattered easily. The liquid began to melt the enchanted wooden entrance and Severus walked out and noticed that he was in a cavern. He moved his legs and almost sprinted when he saw daylight. At the entrance he spotted several men sitting and talking. Severus pulled another vial from the back pouch and drank it. His fingers were slowly getting used to the odd position they were being forced into and his hand moved to pull another after he drank the first. Severus felt his body become light. He was satisfied when his body was transparent. With a Herculean effort Severus pulled back his left arm and threw the warm vial that was still in his hand. At the base of the hill a large explosion shook the ground. The men immediately ran to it. Severus allowed another smirk before he darted in the opposite direction. When he tried to

apparate again, he felt satisfied that his feet felt soft carpet. He looked up and scowled at the men that he laid his eyes on.

“Dolohov, I need to speak with our lord.” The man nodded before turning away. Severus trailed behind and felt his body fail him. He swore to himself as the effects of his potions wore off. He took several more steps before a hand caught him. Dolohov nodded at the potions master before helping him to continue to walk.

At the entrance to the doors Severus saw two old acquaintances. “Alden, McNair, Please move. I must see our Lord.” McNair gave one look at Dolohov and the man immediately jumped back from Severus. Snape fell to the ground in a damaged heap. His half usable left hand found itself pinned to his back. The potions master gave the three an incredulous look.

McNair and Alden pulled out their wands. “We were ordered by our Lord to kill you on sight.” Two wands stared at him. Severus knew Dolohov had a wand on him too. Snape had executed friends in much the same manner. They serve their Lord first. Their lives were secondary. Severus lowered his head in acceptance of that fact. But while he would gladly die for his master, he did not want to die like this.

“I’ll see you three in hell.” Severus gave one desperate squeeze to his pouch and was rewarded with an explosion of gray mist encircling the hall in less than a second. He rolled on the ground and felt three green beams hit the ground he laid on. With another burst of concentration Severus apparated out of the house and in front of Hogwarts. He gave a choked grunt at realizing he would have to rely on the man he hated the most. He stood up shakily and started for the castle.

Two loud cracks sounded behind him. Severus did not hesitate. Adrenaline pumped through his veins as he started running. His eyes tunneled from the side effects of his potions and the strain on his weakened body. Just pass the gates...

Harry's broom zoomed across the highest spire and skimmed the length of the tallest tower. He laughed loudly and his heart pounded in his ears. He pulled up before the broom got past the highest point of the rear court yard where he lived. Wind beat his face when he made a sharp turn. It had been a long while since he had flown, and he wanted to make up for it. With a sharp turn he noticed spell light. He slowed and flew around in a wide circle towards the main gates. Harry spotted two men chasing a third towards the entrance. Harry felt his heart in his throat when he recognized the green spell light as the killing curse. Instantly his broom took off in speeds he did not realize it could handle. The broom shook slightly and it came to a abrupt halt when he turned it to slow.

Harry recognized a very beaten Snape and pulled his wand when red spell light grazed the professor's shoulder, showering the ground with blood. Severus kept running towards the gates and Harry understood what was happening. Harry pulled his wand and looked at the men. He did not recognize either of them but something was telling him they were the enemy. In the back of his mind he wondered if the spells would work at all. He had performed several tests and each one showed that he was at the level of a first year. Harry pointed his wand at the two men giving chase. Just before Harry let go of the spell he felt it was different. He tried to slow it to see why there was such a change, but he couldn't hold the spell.

"Stupefy." The spell cut the air and reached the two men faster than anything Harry ever seen before. The spell hit the fastest of the two men and the man rolled on the ground like a rag doll. The second looked at Harry and raised his wand. Harry simply thought of it and his broom flew strait up. The boy-who-lived did not want to think of it before, but it was glaring obvious now. The trances were definitely weakening his magic. But all of his magic returned in full force during a fight. Harry raised his wand again. "Stupefy."

An exact copy of the previous spell sliced the air making a slight hum before it impacted the second man. The man's body fell into the ground leaving a small cloud of dust. Harry flew down towards the running potions professor. Snape continued to run blindly towards the gates.

Harry sped his broom faster when the older man stumbled and fell to the ground just shy a few feet of passing the gate. Harry landed on the inside of the gate and reached over to pick up Severus. Harry gasped at the man's bruised body and levitated him. He looked back at the men. He was wondering what to do with them knowing he didn't want to actually cross the threshold of the castle. He received his answer a second later when three more men apparated over the downed two. Harry glared at the leader. "Bellatrix."

Bellatrix Lestrange gave a rapturous laugh. "Little Potter! Care for another go?" She raised her wand and cast a powerful hex Harry did not recognize. Harry stumbled back dragging his potions professor with him. The spell stopped in mid air at the gates of the castle with a loud ping. Bellatrix gave a disappointed noise but pointed at the two knocked out men. "Get them out of here." Bellatrix turned to Harry and the unconscious professor. She stopped at the gate entrance and smirked at the boy. "So close and yet, so far away..." She extended her left hand to the open air where the gate was. Her hand made contact with an invisible force. She pressed against it while the leather glove that covered her hand began to smoke. After a moment the barrier burned through her glove and burned her hand. She looked longingly at Harry as her fingertips burned. She reluctantly pulled it away. "Maybe next time we meet, you will be more delicious. Farewell my little toy." Bellatrix smiled at him with something Harry didn't know how to describe. After the crack of her apparition passed Harry sighed in relief. He didn't know what kind of protections were on the castle now, but he wondered why people like Malfoy's father and the old headmaster of Krum's school could pass through safely.

Severus groaned and Harry felt panic grip him. He had forgotten about the hateful man. Harry levitated him and got on his broom. When Harry was positive that the man would not be tossed too much when he followed, the Firebolt flew at a medium speed towards the entrance to Hogwarts. When he reached the infirmary, Harry was disappointed that Madam Pomfrey was not there to help him. Harry ran through the cupboards and realized that most of the things he would need to help the older man were locked up. Harry swore and slowly mended the bruises that he saw with an old quidditch spell he learned in his first year. Oliver Wood had shown it to him after a nasty hit by a bludger hit him in the eye. Harry's eye had swollen quickly but

Oliver refused Harry to go to the hospital wing saying he needed more practice for his debut game. Oliver showed Harry the bruise reducing spell and Harry had used it ever since.

Harry grinned when the bruises had faded to a dull pink. With the swelling purple masses gone Harry knew he had to get the Potions Master something else to help him sleep while he looked for help. Harry then remembered the potion he was working on for remedial potions. He pulled it out of his pocket and stared at it. It was far from perfect by Snape standards, and with all honesty Harry was hesitant to use it on himself. Severus groaned again. Harry removed the stopper and slowly fed the man the potion, now satisfied that the man unconsciously swallowed the liquid. Snape's spasms stilled and he looked as if he were resting. Harry sighed before looking around and finding some quill and paper. He scratched out a quick note to Dumbledore that he needed help and ran outside the school. "HEDWIG!" Harry crumbled the letter into a small dense ball and threw it into the air. Hedwig caught it in mid air. "Dumbledore! Find him, girl!"

Seconds later Harry could no longer see his owl in the sky. Harry allowed his mind to think on what happened in the past hour - from his time getting on the broom to sending the letter. It felt good to be doing something. But his body shook at the memory of the two spells he cast. He turned back to the entrance where he left his broom. He flew around to the back and ran inside intent on making a few more potions to help the downed teacher. Harry knew he had to be in the room with the professor so he could check on the man and give the potions as they were prepared. But he hated the idea of trying to get everything together by magic. After ten minutes of gathering supplies into two cauldrons, he concentrated as hard as he could and was glad both cauldrons lifted off the air slowly. He got on his broom and had the two floating pots follow him around the castle low to the ground incase they both fell. At the entrance, Harry let go of his broom and picked up one cauldron with one hand and hip while levitating the second pot with his wand. When, he entered the infirmary, Snape was still unconscious but at least resting.

After some loud metal scraping on stone, Harry was able to position two tables adjacent to the professor so he could watch the man while

making the potions. When both cauldrons were heated and the potions were started, Harry sighed realizing he would need a third. After rummaging he found a third and thicker cauldron in the back. He set up the potion for blood loss in the new one and watched over them. Two hours later Snape was still not awake and no one had come around to look for him yet. Harry thought if his firebolt was left outside the entrance someone would know he was at least inside the castle and not on the grounds or in his room. Harry looked through the fifth year potions book and stirred one pot with a silver ladle twice counter clock wise before pulling it out to hit the rim with the ladle. A loud chime resounded in the room and the potion turned a light green. Harry smiled that the potion was exactly as he wanted it to turn out. He turned off the heat and poured a vial. He forced the new potion down the mans throat. He coughed slightly before resuming his sleep. Harry looked at him before returning to his potions. Twenty minutes later, Harry was still hovering over three cauldrons and allowed his mind to wonder how Snape had gotten into that condition and how the smarmy teacher escaped.

Harry sighed at one potion and discarded the contents and cleaned the cauldron. The potion was a failure and he had to remake it from scratch again. The day passed quickly with over six potions made. Harry gave a victorious smile when he saw what looked like a proper body restoration draught. He was partial to healing spells himself, but Harry knew no healing spell to heal internal organs. At least with this potion, if someone not injured drinks it, they would not get worse. After the third stir, Harry tapped the lid of the cauldron twice with his bronze stirrer. This potion changed to a pale red. Harry nodded in satisfaction that it looked like the one Snape made last year. He grabbed a ladle and started to pour out three vials.

Something on his left stirred and Harry braced himself for some vicious comment from his thankless Professor. When nothing came he looked up from his potions and saw the man was just staring at the ceiling. Harry looked at the clock and realized he needed to give the professor another dose of blood replenishing potion. He pulled a vial from the bracket that held the completed potions and walked over to the man.

The popping sound from the stopper snapped Severus out of his trance. He focused on Harry and was about to sneer out something but Harry slammed his hand over the man's mouth. Severus' eyes turned wild a moment feeling as if he was captured again. After a second of calm he saw the determined student force open his mouth and place the vial upside down. Severus almost gagged at the liquid that was forced into his mouth. The Potions Master tried to sit up and spit it out but was met with a quidditch player's strength that forced him back on the bed with the hand covering his mouth. Severus glared at the boy.

Harry looked back determined that the man was going to swallow his potion. "Drink it. I have been giving it to you all day. This one isn't going to kill you." Severus gave one final glare before he reluctantly swallowed the potion. Harry removed his hand and went to the sink to wash his hands. When he came back he turned off all of the cauldrons and started pouring potions into vials and labeling them. When he was done he placed the cauldrons in the deep sinks at the end of the infirmary and turned to the professor who was off staring at the ceiling again. Harry was not sure what to say, whatever happened to the man devastated him.

"I called for help nearly eight hours ago. I am going to try and see where everyone was." Harry walked out of the infirmary but not before he placed the vials next to the man's bed. Severus stared at the vials unsure what to say. When the boy was gone, Severus pulled up his sleeve and simply stared at the tattoo on his forearm.

-O-

Harry walked outside and sighed. It was getting stuffy in the infirmary and the cool night air was what he needed. He sat on the steps of Hogwarts doors and wondered what happened to his note. The moon was rising and Harry was glad it was not going to be full for another week. Just as Harry was about to walk in to check on Snape he heard steps clacking against the walk way at the gates. He looked up and waved at two people he recognized. "Tonks! Bill!"

They slowed when they reached the teen. "What's wrong Harry? Sorry we are late, Albus was in France when he received the wad of

paper from Hedwig, he fire-called us through the floo. And that was six minutes ago.”

Harry waved the two to follow him. The couple exchanged glances before they entered the infirmary. They both gasped at the site of Snape. He was in tears and was clutching his arm.

-O-

Twenty minutes before Tonks and Bill arrived at Hogwarts Tom Riddle had gathered his Death Eaters for a banquet for the fallen. The memorial was the placing of the honored deads’ names on a stone tablet. The twenty Death Eaters and their families at in solemn observance. Tom had spoken to each family commenting how each person who had fallen, Death Eater and apprentice alike, had performed their duties. It was because of this that they will be honored and their names will never be tarnished. Towards the end of the banquet Voldemort leaned over to Peter Pettigrew who stood aside at attention. The man was doing his job by observing the crowd. When Voldemort gave him a look, Peter leaned forward so his ear was to his master’s mouth. “I want you to look over Anthony and Falden. Report to me if anything happens to them.”

Peter nodded but asked. “Do you think whatever attacked them would return to kill them?”

“Egyptian curses are thorough. I need to see if these guardians will hunt down all who attempt to find the book, or merely deter them.” Peter bowed before resuming his observation of the tables. Voldemort finished his meal and nodded to Rudolphus. The Lestrangle stood from his place at the table and walked over to his Lord.

“Yes my Lord?”

“I have not seen Severus. Who was the last to speak with him?” Rudolphus looked around and used the ring on his finger. It heated and chilled when his gaze met with three others. “Speak to Lucius, McNair...” He paused and raised an eyebrow at his wife. “And my wife. I ask of my Lord, that if she needs to be disciplined, I do it.”



Voldemort nodded. Several minutes passed where dinner was over and men and women were having pleasant conversation. Tom finally stood up and allowed the tables and their contents to disappear. "My loyal followers, today marks a tragic time. But I must ask for forgiveness for bringing more dire news out into the open before the night is done. Lucius Malfoy, Devon McNair, Bellatrix Lestrange. Please come forward."

Malfoy confidently walked forward along with McNair who did not understand why he was called. Bellatrix smiled slightly at a private joke to herself.

The fake smile Voldemort had felt. His crimson eyes looked at the three Death Eaters. "Where is Severus Snape?"

Malfoy smirked while he looked at his master. "My Lord, I wanted to speak to you in private about your 'most loyal Death Eater', but I guess it is out in the open now. I have proof that he was a traitor and.." Voldemort pulled his wand from his sleeve. Malfoy felt his voice fail him.

"You are a fool Lucius Malfoy. I would know if someone is a traitor to my cause. I would know when a man decides to be a spy among my followers. This is the last time your selfishness will disgrace this hall. Now tell me, what did you do to Severus Snape?" Malfoy struggled against the feeling of fear that gripped him. The man had done his own machinations for so long without his lord that he had forgotten the man's power. Even after Voldemort was resurrected and he returned to the man all the Death Eaters knew and loved as a leader, Lucius had forgotten that the man was also a monster... a monster and a genius at magic.

Lucius felt the pain stab through his mind. He had never felt his mental barriers shredded like this before. Lucius knew he overestimated how his own powers held against his master.

Voldemort stared into the eyes of the man and felt he would have to do something he thought he did not need to do since his rebirth over his father's grave. Without even saying the incantation, Lucius fell to the torture curse. Voldemort looked at the writhing Death Eater

expressionlessly. After a moment, Tom blinked and sighed exasperatingly at his Death Eater. "Look what you have made me do, Lucius. We are both of proper and noble birth. And here I am cursing you like some kind of mudblood."

Lucius looked at his master through a thick haze. He gasped for air. The other Death Eaters stood in a circle. The families had fled the room at the first sign that this was Death Eater business. The group looked at Lestrage and McNair wondering what their role was. All knew of Rudolphus' ring and its power to find links between objects and people.

Voldemort looked at both Bellatrix and McNair. Bella was smiling at the show, not the least bit worried about herself. McNair was confused and afraid but he did not waiver his gaze from his master. Even had Voldemort not stripped through Malfoy's mind, he would still know that Bella and Devon were loyal and following their orders regardless of who said it was in Lord Voldemort's name. Tom looked back towards Lucius and let the magic and anger of this traitorous action coursed through him. Lucius opened his mouth and foam sputtered out. "Powerful, isn't it Lucius?" His voice was a whisper but could clearly be heard by his circle. "You know this spell is run on hate, not magic. This is how much hate I have for you now. You have dishonored your name and your class." Voldemort held the spell for several more seconds before he let it go.

Voldemort walked up to the man and kicked Malfoy's arm so his mark was facing the sky. "My followers, I ask you to turn your backs. None of you should witness the fall from grace I am forcing on this man." The circle turned their backs. Bellatrix and McNair promptly followed. When all were turned away, Voldemort lowered his wand until it was touching the dark mark on Lucius' arm. In silent agony, Malfoy watched the ink from the mark slowly collapsed on itself and sink into Voldemort's wand. When Tom stepped back, he turned towards Devon and Bellatrix. "You two have followed orders, even if you questioned their validity. Either way you have failed me and dishonored your name. You will both be forever second class. Your children will not see your fate, just you." Bellatrix turned her head slightly confused at the sentence but shrugged and walked to her

husband who looked at his master gratefully. Devon paled and returned to his spot in the circle.

“Lucius Malfoy. You have failed me and allowed your personal greed to cloud your judgment. Your family name will forever be seen filthy as the mudblood class. You will never have the grace of serving me again. Now leave.” Lucius looked at his master. Malfoy was shaken. He tried to speak up, but three Death Eaters gripped him and one slammed his hand over the traitors mouth.

He was thrown out the door where his wife and son stood. They picked up the half sobbing man. Voldemort dismissed his followers and went to his chamber. He sat on his sofa and closed his eyes. He moved his hand to his wand and started drawing a continuous pattern in the air. There are now only seventeen dark marks... I just need to find the one that was not touched by tonight's events. Voldemort finally found it. He opened his eyes and saw a blurred vision of a ceiling. He felt as if his body was tucked by blankets and despair, shame and doubt filled his mind. He looked down and saw that he was cradling his arm of a dark mark. Voldemort sighed knowing this mark had already broken. The stage Lucius set for several ‘loyal death eaters’ who were nothing more than apprentices, try to apprehend Severus, had done the job. There was no chance now to try and regain Severus’ trust that Tom had created over the past twenty years. Twenty years was long ago. Severus was still just a child when Tom found him and created one of his most loyal Death Eaters. To be a spy you must be the most loyal servant, and never let your faith waiver. Severus had that. Tom knew he deserved better than this...

Tom let himself withdraw from his former follower’s mind and looked at his own blank forearm. There was a knock at the door. “Come in.”

“My Lord.” Tom looked up and back to his forearm. Rudolphus walked in and closed the door behind him. He went to a seat across from his lord and waited until his leader was ready to speak.

“Did you know, there was a time before I found you, where I considered making the mark so that we all could wear it proudly? To carry a mark in the open to show we are proud... I thought of giving

myself that mark... It is such a shame that I have to kill my beloved spell twice in a single day.” Voldemort raised his wand to his wrist and concentrated ink formed at the tip of his wand. It was done in moments. Voldemort’s mind let go the sounds of Severus’ anguished and abandoned cries.

“Severus was damaged too much to be of help. His faith in me was broken, and despair clouds his thoughts as his true enemy heals him. The Death Eater, Severus, is truly dead.”

Rudolphus nodded while folding his hands in front of him. “I have word from Peter. When Falden entered his home he fell dead. His wife contacted the aurors and then collapsed. Peter heard a doctor at St. Mungos say she is barren. Then, he apparated to Anthony’s home only to find that he too was dead.”

Voldemort nodded before closing his eyes. Now there are only fourteen Dark Marks. He reached out and let the marks disappear from the bodies of his fallen. When the job was done he stood and beckoned for Rudolphus to follow.

Down several flights of stairs Voldemort stood staring at the tablet of the fallen. Seventeen names of The Honored Dead laid there. There were all men and women who had died serving their Lord. He pointed his wand at the tablet and then there were twenty names of the honored. The newest three were:

Falden Danesworth

Anthony Browson

Severus Snape

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Severus gripped his forearm and gritted his teeth. I am truly alone now... He jerked his head at the opening doors and felt his humiliation was complete. He loathed the boy who had undoubtedly saved him. Severus knew he was a loyal Death Eater. His Lord did as well. It was only in a few moments of despair did he doubt that. In doing so,

he lost his mark and his place at his lord and master's side. That abandonment was worse than any cruciatus curse he could have felt. Worse than the humiliation he could think of.

He looked at the boy and the Weasley and useless auror who followed him. He raised his arm and said in a guttural voice. "I am free of Voldemort's influence." He lowered his arms and laid back in his bed wishing that the earth would swallow him. Or at least let them know that he was a loyal Death Eater. Maybe if he told them, they would execute him and put him out of his misery. He looked up with haunted eyes at the Weasley and Auror.

Tonks and Bill stared at the man. Both of them knew that he wasn't acting. He was devastated by losing his mark. They pulled their wands but stopped when Harry walked forward.

"Professor, you need to take this potion now." Harry unstoppered another vial from the stand and handed it to the professor. The man stared at the vial when it was placed in his hand. "I know that I am not a good potions maker, but it won't kill you." Severus looked at the boy and drank the vial. Harry grinned at the man. "Think I can take Pomfery's place when she retires?" Severus snorted through the potion, all suicidal thoughts from drinking the imbecile's potion forgotten.

"You are a moron Potter. You can't cast a healing spell, much less make a potion. It is only my own stubborn constitution that saved me from your potion skills."

Harry grinned wider glad to see the solemn professor more like the man he knew and hated. "Well, now that you are better, I need to go sleep before I get another trance for staying up so late. Good night professor. Tonks, Bill, I will need to talk to you both about some things when I see you in the morning." Harry paused for a second before he added. "Provided that I don't have a trance tonight that knocks me out for a few days." He waved the three of them a good night before walking off to the entrance to grab his broom and heading to his room at the back of the castle.

After several minutes of silence Severus looked up from the empty vial. He knew that even while entertaining the idea of turning himself in, these two already knew. They had drawn their wands the moment they saw him. There was no misunderstanding of what they thought. "What will be done with me?"

"We do not know yet. Albus does not know, as we just arrived. Harry was oblivious." Severus snorted again at the idea of Potter having a clue. "Don't short change him just because he is a Potter, Snape. I seem to recall your own family having one or two sheep that strayed from the family's flock. His father was just like yours. An exile, even among his own family." Bill stared at the man waiting for a reaction. When he received none he continued. "Like I was saying we don't know what will happen to you. But we can give you an option."

Tonks turned towards her friend and hissed. "Bill."

"You just said we need someone else, Harry has the drive, but with this illness of his, it's no use." Bill turned towards his former professor. "You know what will happen when Albus hears of these events, regardless of your true loyalties."

Snape growled out. "I will be treated just like that dog, Sirius." Tonks couldn't contain it anymore and punched the bed ridden man.

"Talk like that again, and you will see what an insult to a Black entails." Severus gauged the words carefully never seeing the woman so coordinated and serious in his life.

"What is my second option Billius Weasley?"

Bill looked over to Tonks before she nodded. "It is ironic that you should end up in this group Severus. But you may have a conflict of interests."

Severus understood that whatever happens to him now, he might go against his formal Lord in a very real confrontation. Looking back to the vial, he knew that his world was changing when James Potter's son brewed a decent restoring draught. "I am in. What do you want?"

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Harry walked into the room and sighed. He was ready for bed but his head shot up from the bed and he turned his neck despite the crack and pop it made. He jumped out of bed and ran to his desk where his two letters from Susan sat for the whole day. He opened the one that had several creases in it.

Harry! It's almost your birthday! I wanted to tease you one more time before I send you your birthday gift. I know you are dieing to get it, so I am giving you a hint. It is something that connects us. I know you are getting frustrated but that's half the fun! Well, enough of that. I was talking to my friend, Angela. She was saying that there is a new fan club for this one writer for The Prophet. It's the one that has been printing stories about you and some other people. But I guess she is really good, because she has gotten a lot of people motivated to vote over some bill about education. Since last years mess, she argued people need to vote to keep the government and the school board separate.

I'll send you the Prophet letter if you want to see it. But I am still kind of nervous about this lady. Her name is Ninny. Yeah, that sounds trustworthy. I just hope it isn't another Rita who wants to dabble in politics rather than gossip. That's all this world needs, a convincing back seat driver. Uh oh, Ami wants something. Write back! Hugs!

Love

Susan

Harry folded the letter and suddenly remembered that his birthday had come and gone. He groaned when he realized he was unconscious for the whole thing. He opened the second letter wondering what she would say after he disappeared.

Harry! You are ok! First I want to hug you. Hug! Now I want to yell at you for not saying you were getting ready to move! Ami says you can't tell me where, and I can't use Julie anymore. So I don't know when I can send you another mail. And I sorta got my self barred from the Auror floor at the Ministry for looking for Tonks. Ami wasn't

happy with me either. I had to pass this to her, then wait for her to find Tonks to pass it to wherever you are at. Did I mention that I am mad that you didn't say you were moving to somewhere else? You could have at least told me! Well now that I spent all my fury... Happy Birthday! I hope you had a good one. Remember that writer I was talking about in the last letter?( hopefully you read that one first.) She got the votes the bill needed to succeed! Can you believe it? She got people backing her to keep the school board and government separate. The law is signed in a month and the Ministry will have no say in what goes on at Hogwarts. I don't know if that's a good or a bad thing. I know Dumbledore is a great man, but what happens when someone takes over who isn't as great? Or what happens if the school board gets corrupt or paid off or something? Yeah, I know the school board is a bunch of parent volunteers, but still. No muggle adult has a say in that, and many of the pure blooded families are poor. That is just asking for the system to be abused.

Harry paused reading the letter and squinted. The scrawling was getting tighter and scratchier as the letter had progressed and he let himself laugh when he had to stare at some scrawling at the side of the letter between two paragraphs that was hastily added.

Yeah, I know you are going to say it, so I will say it first. This is mostly how Ami said it. But she says it better than I could.

If you get a chance have Hedwig fly by with a letter, maybe she could stay. I could at least reply. One letter a day is better than nothing. I have missed you terribly these past few days.

Love

Susan.

Harry wanted to kick himself for not thinking about Susan's reaction to his abrupt 'disappearance'. He placed the letters in his trunk and started thinking about his reply. Hedwig had just flown to where ever in the nine hells Albus was in France. So she would likely not be up to sending a letter tomorrow if she even returned tomorrow. But, maybe the day after she could send the letter. He was just not sure if he should throw the letter in a ball like he did Albus's letter since he was



unwilling to tie a letter to her leg. Hedwig's claws are too big to grip an envelope in its talons. Harry thought a moment before he went back to his trunk and pulled out one of his blank essay scrolls. It may be a waste of paper, but Hedwig could pick it up.

Late that night Harry finally rolled the scroll up and tied it before crawling to bed. He laid on the bed and thought of Susan's letters, and was glad a small constant was back in his life.

He couldn't find the words to say what he felt while he was writing. But as he slid into deep sleep, the back of Harry's mind found the right words he didn't write in his letter. I miss you too Susan.

- - - End Chapter 2 Dark Mark - - -

A/N: This chapter made me nervous about everyone's reaction to Voldemort, and as we are going to be working with this version of the guy for the next two stories, this is either a make it or break it chapter. I wanted to do something different than the same old crazy Voldemort. I never once thought of Voldemort or his death eaters as anything less than a serious threat. They are a group of people who had been able to terrify a nation to such an extent that after a decade of their disappearance they still could not be mentioned without fear. The ability to instill this kind of reaction can't just be done through simple harassment, but true psychological damage. If any kind of organization could do this, they would need to be competent and well, very Slytherin. Voldemort is the embodiment of the ideals Slytherin represented both good and bad.

And if he was such a conniving man, then he could surely recruit his death eaters in a much better way than through fear as well as only selecting the truest and brightest of the Slytherin. When I read the Canon, I see Lucius Malfoy as a very ambitious man. His ability to stay aloft so many allegations is a testament to his ability to work with people, and not just throwing money around which he is likely doing as well. I see the other Death Eaters, or in this story, Voldemort's 'Death Marks' just as cunning as Lucius, just not as rich or as self absorbed as the Malfoy.

This chapter was important since we are introduced to not just Voldemort, but to also Tom. Voldemort is the radical who will do anything to succeed. His Dark Marks, are nothing to him but objects and a means to an end. Tom is the leader, and the man his followers truly want to be accepted by. His Death Eaters are the people he can trust to help him build a new world under a new rulership.

And I think this is the longest A/N I have ever written. Woot! See you all next chapter.

## Chapter 3 Harry's Fire

Harry growled in frustration. "I just wrote that letter and forgot about it. It was long too! How could I forget to place it in the drawer before I fell asleep!" Harry sighed before banishing the dust from the burned paper along with the other ashes into a corner to be cleaned by a house elf. Harry shivered thinking of what Hermione would say to letting an elf clean up such a mess. He quickly bathed and dressed before heading down stairs. He was way behind in his exercises and he needed to talk to Bill and Tonks about the spells reaction when he saved Snape. The spells he cast were definitely not normal.

After breakfast Harry sat down in front of his desk and started to go through the spell exercises he was given. The seven scrolls tested speed, accuracy, power, steadiness and consistency. It was the consistency part that Harry found was next to impossible for him. The same spell time after time seemed to vary from normal, to abysmal to wild. Harry pointed his wand at the feather again and cast the levitation charm he learned as a first year. He felt his ears burn when the feather shot through the table and slammed itself into the ground. Harry wondered why he could cast magic normally for those few minutes from when he hexed those death eaters until the time he got Snape into the infirmary. Harry was half scared he would try to levitate his professor only to make his body shoot a few hundred feet into the air. And the two stupefy spells were something else he needed answers for. It was like his magic knew now was not a time to mess around. The feeling of a natural flood at the point of his wand was still fresh in his mind. The feeling made him both anxious about his wand and excited at the sensation it gave. He shivered at the thought of the men he hit. They did not move when he hit them, and Harry did not want to think if they were still conscious.

Harry played with his wand for a second before deciding to try something. He moved the feather to the table again and stared at it. Harry remembered the feeling he had before he cast the spell outside of Hogwarts. When he was confident he had close to the same feeling he breathed out, "Wingardium Leviosa." The feather shot into the air and stopped after several feet. Harry kept his wand pointed at it, but the feather vibrated violently. Harry lowered his wand to cancel the spell and the feather slammed back into the table with force

nothing that weighed so little should be able to generate. The table buckled slightly before the feather just laid there. Harry stared at it. After a moment of thinking, he felt nervous at his decision.

“Let’s see if I can make that consistent.” He pointed his wand at the feather again and cast the spell. The feather flew into the air several feet above the table and floated there. Harry walked closer to it with the wand still pointed at it. At closer inspection, the vibration of the feather was more like the feather was having problems deciding in what direction it wanted to fly to. Harry slowly lowered his wand and pointed at the table. The feather moved just as slowly as his wand to the table where Harry canceled the spell with out incident.

Harry looked at the feather. “I didn’t have this problem until I had that dream.” Harry set his wand on the table and sat down intent on trying to fall asleep and see if he could find some answers.

-O-

The land in the peoples own tongue is called the Sahara. Evening was finally approaching giving the white sand a golden glow. Air rustled before the sands parted under two large clawed feet. The robed being turned its bird head to its left glancing at the sky before it. Had a muggle seen the beast, they would likely see the ancient god Horus. The bird had only a few thoughts about the past and let it go just as quickly. It screeched loudly several times before the sky melted away. The mirage of continuous sand broke in favor of a cold stone temple lined with stand alone pillars welcoming those who entered it. The bird-human walked forward and entered the temple and noticed the changes that had happened since its last visit. Several of the walls had collapsed by unnatural means. After looking around a second time to ensure privacy, the demigod walked down several halls before stopping at the entrance to a sealed door. It scraped a clawed hand against the door. The door turned to sand and fell to the floor. The bird walked into the doorway and spotted several stone statues. Three of the statues were cracked and the bird walked to these. The image of Horus screeched for several moments before the stone statues moved slightly and shattered. In their place lay three pieces of metal. The Egyptian creature picked each up carefully and left, its mission accomplished.

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Albus Dumbledore set down his goblet and pushed back his plate. The professor had returned to his office after speaking to the Minister of France. Minister Cornelius Fudge had, for better or for worse, kept his spot in office. The wizards and witches of Britain were frightened of the news that the assassination of the Minister of Britain was done by a wizard. What the he killer had said to the Minister before he died was a closely guarded secret. The Death Eaters words made the leaders of Britain nervous. It also motivated Fudge to actively make public appearances demonstrating that aurors were in force. Fudge had even gone so far as to review several proposals that were rejected during the first war with Voldemort.

Albus had returned to Hogwarts and was disappointed that Harry was asleep. The headmaster had not spoken to Bill since the night before when Hedwig sent a message that said, 'Help - Harry'. After bating off temptation to wake the boy, Albus felt content to wait for Bill to come and give him news. The information would not likely be urgent if Bill had not immediately send for help. Albus looked down towards the entrance of Hogwarts.

Albus is uniquely tuned to Hogwarts. As Headmaster, the Professor had a more powerful bond than the previous men and women who held the position. At one time Albus thought it was because he was inadequate to be the head of the school.

Regardless of the reasons why, Albus took the opportunity of having a strong bond to safe guard the children he taught. At the moment a man was walking the halls of Hogwarts he had not expected to see for another few weeks. Albus left his office and met the man half way through the castle.

"Hello Severus. To what do I owe the pleasure of a visit?" Severus shook his head before Albus silently lead them to room that was furnished to be a study. The doors closed behind them and the headmaster took a seat at one of the single chairs near the fire. Severus took another adjacent to the old mans'.

"There has been a purging in the Death Eaters." Albus sat up straighter. This was something he had not thought Voldemort would do. Severus raised his arm and showed the missing mark from his arm. The mark-less arm was free of any kind of scar or blemish. It was as if there never was a spell cast on the Potions Master. "Voldemort removed several people from their status as Death Eaters. Myself, and several others have had our mark removed. Two people have tried to flee after being freed. One was killed, and the other is now missing. I spoke with Tonks. She said they found a few people dead. I confirmed they were Death Eaters. From what I could see, I am the only living ex-Death Eater."

Albus listened to the man before he finally looked Severus in the eye. "There is more, but you are not prepared to tell me." It was a statement.

Severus nodded. "I was fortunate. Potter found me as I was making my way to the castle. The boy helped defend me long enough to get onto the grounds."

Albus gave an 'ah' before he stroked his beard. "So it was about you, that the letter Harry sent me was about."

"I would believe so Albus. Tonks and Bill had checked in while Potter was forcing a potion down my throat." Albus smiled but sobered quickly.

"Would you like to stay at the castle till the beginning of the term Severus?" The Potions Master nodded.

"But there is one thing that concerns me about this year. Several of my house are members of Voldemort's followers, with my loss of my mark, it is possible one of them will have the mark when they return. It is also likely my old enemies will work through their children if they intend to kill me." Albus would normally find himself trying to wave off his teachers' fear. But now that the man was likely exiled, it could be a real possibility.

"Very well, I will see about finding an assistant that can be trusted to aid and watch you while teaching. But on such short notice, you will

have to make do for now. Just to inform you, Harry is here while he is being treated for a magical ailment. He has freedom of the castle, but he is trying to steer clear of people incase he has another trance.”

Severus was tempted to ask what a ‘trance’ was but decided it was not worth the effort. Snape bowed to the old man before leaving the room. He gave a long exhale. He was glad he could still lie to the old man. Mental capacity is a fickle entity. It does not take much to force its collapse. In the safety of his potion lab, Severus pulled a piece of parchment from his robes and set to work following the recipe.

-O-

Susan held her toss pillow tightly. She was told that Harry got her letter a few days ago. It was after the third night that Amelia, her aunt, told her to stop waiting by the open window. Susan had constantly asked her mother about the articles that were being written about Harry. Several people were found dead over the course of a few days, and people were beginning to panic. Especially after that Danesworth matron could no longer have a child when her husband died. It was a major throw back to the days when Voldemort would kill families. But this was more vicious.

To a wizarding family, the family name and the clan or nobility they hailed from was praised and tracked well over several hundred years. Many of the most prominent pure bloods could trace their lineage to before the creation of Hogwarts and the times when Merlin, Grifindor, Hufflepuff, Ravenclaw and Slitherin walked the earth. For a pure blood there was nothing more tragic than seeing the end of a line that lasted for thousands of years. But during Voldemort's reign in the 1970s, over one hundred lines were killed out and many more were down to a single heir. Susan's own family was down to her as the sole heir to the Bones' line since her aunt was hit by a curse that made her loose the ability to have children.

Susan leaned forward and looked at the article that sat in front of her. The Prophet was getting weird, now that there were conflicting articles in the same issues. The author Ninny was seemingly contradicting what ever other writers were printing. Normally that was not a big deal since that in itself would sell papers. But what was odd,

was that Ninny seemed to be providing proof and has seemingly tried to incite the people to write to the paper. Susan turned the paper from Where's the Heroes? to the next page. The other article seemed to shout out that we are our own heroes. The People's War shouted itself in bold scripted letters. It talked about the Ministry and the new laws Fudge is trying to pass to give Aurors more authority. Among the headlines the one that bothered her the most was the one that was printed four days ago.

### Teenager raids Ministry!

During the early morning of August third, Aurors failed to apprehend a figure described as a young teenager with black hair. It is unknown if anything was taken from the Ministry, but it is confirmed that the teenager had gone through the Ministry all the way to the entrance of the Department of Mysteries, before being discovered. Auror VonBaer

had this to say, "A young man had indeed successfully navigated the labyrinth floor that was the main security of the Department of Mysteries. The ease at which he had been able to escape our pursuers during the search through the floor, suggests that the young man has an intimate understanding of the floor, and of the properties of the Ministry of Magic itself." While this reporter had questioned several Aurors about the supposed teen that could fend himself off against several trained Aurors, a similar incident occurred just two months ago when Harry Potter invaded the Ministry to search for an item in the same department. Is the 'dark haired' teenager Harry Potter returning to find what he could not find before? Or another person with an agenda that is darker, or better than the one Harry Potter had when he entered the Ministry and is now in hiding for the summer?

The article itself would have been a laugh had it not been for her Aunt's reaction to it when she read the story to her during breakfast. The older woman just stood up pulled the article out of her nieces' hands and then abruptly left. Aunt Ami had been tight lipped about the story and her face turned to stone when ever Susan asked about the boy she had been writing to since the beginning of the summer.



Susan's only hope to speak with Harry before the beginning of the term was to wait for him to owl her.

-O-

Bill closed the doors to the office and bid good night to the goblins in gobbledygook. As the head curse breaker at Gringotts, Bill never had a long day as he did when he worked in Egypt. But after his break up with Fleur, and the cancellation of their wedding, he hated the extra free time. It was only thanks to Tonks that he did not go stir crazy. Bill apparated to his flat where he took off his dragon hide gloves and rubbed the golden band ring on his right middle finger. It flashed for a second before it faded. After four minutes, Tonks stumbled into the fire. It was another five minutes before Severus walked through the fire place. He nodded to Tonks and pulled out a single vial of smoky blue liquid.

Severus sat down and put his elbows on his knees. "I spoke to Albus. He bought the story. We were lucky it was close to truth as it could get."

Tonks nodded while Bill walked towards his book case and opened a single book. In it the pages turned transparent revealing two other vials. He placed the new one next to the others and closed the book. "That will make things easier now. The scroll said the island of Itis is located inside a craggy entrance along the coast of Egypt. From here on in, Voldemort will send more people, or come along himself." Bill turned to Tonks who was leaning against the book shelf.

"I was able to get the stuff you wanted Bill, I even got a few extra if we need anymore for others." Tonks paused while thinking of Harry. She felt guilty for not visiting and had used the excuse that she was busy. But that didn't ease her guilt that the teen was alone in a castle. And two of his only friends that could visit him had not done so.

Bill looked at her before sighing. "I guess we should be thankful that you are planning ahead, but it really is a pain to look for others who are willing, and the fact they need to make that potion for themselves."

Tonks just shrugged. "It's not as if we can't afford the materials for the potions. And if we are facing bigger odds from now on, then I would like the chance to expand our numbers."

Severus watched the two argue it out and finally asked. "So what is my part in this Bill?"

Bill went into his room and quickly pulled a cloak from a hand carved trunk. When he returned from his room he extended the cloak so Severus could see it. "You are helping us keep the Human war strictly Human."

Severus looked at the cloak and the hood that exuded a dark aura. Snape put the cloth over his shoulders and put on the hood. The cloth moved slightly, and Severus understood what the two of them were doing. When he looked at them in genuine respect, Bill handed the potion back to Severus with the last ingredient added.

Severus didn't hesitate to drink the potion. While he thought it was ironic that he exchanged his service from one master to potentially another one. He knew that with the disgrace of being discarded, he would not have it any other way.

-O-

Harry laid in his bed for the remainder of the day. He had no success trying to induce sleep or forcing the trance to start. He finally gave up and asked for dinner. Several plates appeared in the common room's dinning table. Harry sat and helped himself the seven course meal that constantly replenished itself after he took something off the tray. Harry rested his cheek against his left hand while chewing. The day was a pointless waste of time. The need to speak to Tonks and Bill was long forgotten in exchange for the need to find out for himself what was happening to him. Professor Dumbledore's advice was not something Harry thought he needed at the moment. The doctors tests were pointless since they already told him things he knew. He had no control over his magic and that his lack of control was dangerous.

After dinner, Harry went to shower and walked outside into the cooling early evening air. Being inside his bed room all day made him

feel like he needed to exercise or at least walk around. Harry walked the perimeter of the castle and entered the castle mildly curious if Professor Snape was up and about, or was still bed ridden. Harry was not sure if he was disappointed that the man was gone, but he chalked the thought up to just being bored and lonely. Harry sighed and was tempted to find a portrait to talk to when he tripped on a rug. The teen looked around confused why he tripped. Right above him was a cackling Peeves.

“Sorry wee one. But it is a treat to find one of you kids out here during the sunny season.” Peeves body was laying in mid-air and he lowered himself so his body was Harry’s eye level. “My only regret is that I don’t have anything prepared! Oh the things I could do to torment you with no one around!” The poltergeist laughed wildly.

Harry looked at the specter and felt his mouth twitch. Finally he burst out laughing much to the spirits’ confusion. Harry waved his hand waving off the specter as it came closer to look at him. “Sorry Peeves, but you must be as lonely as I am. I am pretty much stuck here until school starts. And even then I don’t know if I will be able to be around people. My magic is pretty sickly right now.”

Peeves looked at the boy, his interest raised. “Sick? What can get magic sick?”

Harry smiled and started walking. “Don’t know. It’s why I am here. If those doctors don’t figure it out before school starts, I won’t be able to do anything fun. Not even a prank.” The teen added thinking of Peeve’s favorite past time that matched his fathers.

“Pranks? No pranks is an unthinkable crime! IF you can’t prank the lovelies, then I will for you!”

Harry smiled at the poltergeist. “I am sure The Marauders will smile on your expeditions.” The ghost suddenly stopped and stared at the boy in surprise. Harry turned around and saw the ghost suddenly bite his fist. “What is it Peeves?”

“You know of the Marauders?”

Harry grinned thinking back to the twins. "My father was Prongs."

The specter stared at the teen until the ghosts' eyes lit up in recognition. Peeves squealed in delight before he grabbed Harry. The child of a Marauder was about to protest before his body was raised several feet in the air. Not a second later, Harry was launched down the hall. Echoing laughter followed him and Harry screamed when they came to the stairs while they were moving. Harry's body stopped for a moment before he was launched straight up through the tower that the stairs moved around. Harry felt his stomach churn. Quidditch and riding a Firebolt did not prepare him for the jarring forces that weaved him around several flights of moving stair cases. When he cleared the highest stair case Harry screamed when he kept climbing. The ceiling was approaching rapidly and Harry covered his head in preparation for the impact.

After a second where Harry swore he should have made contact he stopped flying and fell ungracefully on the floor. The large room had a hole in the center and Harry could see that he was in a hidden room that was directly over the staircases. Harry dusted himself off and turned to the sound of laughter. "Where are we Peeves?"

"My home! I found this a long time ago! My favorite pranks are here, look!" Peeves dove into a chest. It opened and random scrolls, empty balloons, and various other hazards flew out of the trunk. Harry approached it when the items finally stopped flying. At the bottom of the trunk was a map. The map was made of well worn, leathery scroll paper. The map had many folds and was much larger than any map Harry had ever seen. After a single glance Harry immediately recognized the layout. "Is it another Marauders map?"

Peeves cackled wildly. "Marauders Map? I have heard of that piece of shite. No! This is a builders map! I explored this castle for hundreds of years!" His voice squealed in glee. "But this map shows things I only found after seeing it. Here!" Peeves' transparent hand pointed at a fold on the map. "I hide in these rooms when the Baron searches for me. I hide my favorite toys here in those dungeons! But here is the real fun begins!" Peeves pointed at a level of the castle Harry never knew existed. "There are windows that talk here! They have the greatest ideas for pranks!" Peeves was excited in sharing his

discovery. "But they like pranks that only the flesh people can do." Peeves crossed his arms in a pout. Harry looked at the map and smiled. "Do you think you can show me this place tomorrow? I need to get some sleep now." Harry yawned to emphasize his exhaustion.

Peeves gave a moan of disappointment for losing his only entertainment. But it quickly left him with the prospect of having more fun tomorrow. "Sure I can!" Peeves grabbed Harry and flew down the hole. Harry screamed out Peeves name who cackled loudly. The sounds of their shouts echoed the Halls.

Harry sat down on the steps and leaned forward trying to gasp for breath. Peeves continued to pout at the boy. "You wouldn't be so out of breath if you didn't scream the whole way!" Peeves paused in mid thought. "But then it wouldn't be as funny if you didn't scream. Which is better?" Peeves began to pace.

"It's fine Peeves. I'll see you tomorrow. Oh if something happens and I don't make it. Just know its not you. My illness might have put me in bed again." Peeves gave an exaggerated raspberry.

"Alright, but you will get punished for missing."

Harry laughed. "Fair enough."

-O-

The ground crumbled under their combined weight. Rudolphus pointed his wand at the ground and transfigured it into solid ground before the three continued walking. At the entrance to the temple, Bellatrix, Rudolphus and Voldemort walked around the halls carefully looking over every hieroglyph. A hour passed and their search for anything they had missed was fruitless.

"My Lord I don't believe we have missed anything. I have searched the Hieroglyphs and nothing was mentioned."

Voldemort rubbed his chin in thought. He turned to the others. "If we found nothing then it is likely, that there is a third temple we were not aware of. Which gives us more reason to search this one for a clue of

a different nature.” Voldemort thought on the problem then started walking forward with a purpose. Over his shoulder his red eyes gazed levelly on his dark marks. “Find anything relating to another location other than the Books’ temple. We need to confirm that this is truly the result of a curse.” Voldemort turned back to enter deeper into the temple. His final thoughts were said silently to himself. Or confirm that the guardians were invoked by someone else.

-O-

Susan groaned in frustration. It took her three days to build up the nerve to owl Harry’s friends, Hermione Granger and Ronald Weasley. But both letters were quickly returned. The Owl Post Master said that his owls could not find the recipients. Susan laid on her bed and looked at Julie who was still ignoring her. The red headed Bones smiled. It was rare to have her owl angry at her, but this was the third time in so many months. After a moment Susan finally gave a huff of air. “You know I need to keep you here now that Ami is out of town. You are my only emergency line to her.” The owl hooted but still didn’t look at her.

Susan stood from her chair and stretched. She grabbed her cloak and reached for the door. She turned to her owl. “I am going to Diagon Alley. I’ll be back later this afternoon.” Julie gave a reluctant hoot.

Susan took the next few hours to stretch out her legs walking among the shops she was familiar with. She had indulged herself buying a single pretty robe that matched her favorite blouse and even went so far as to buy some ice-cream for herself. Now that she sat on a park bench she saw several groups of friends walking by and chatting happily. Susan sighed and then scowled at herself. I could have at least floored Hanna. Maybe she could have come out too. Susan stood up and started walking to Diagon Alley. It was the second safest Alley in the area and more young adults tend to gather there since there was a popular court there. At the end of Diagon Alley Susan took a left and walked down a dainty alley called Empress Alley. Many of her friends had gotten chased out of this area since they were not from rich pureblooded families. The Alley is mainly catered

to the richest of Britain and nearby countries who cant support such a market.

Several store owners recognized her and waved. Each made an attempt to her beckon Susan for her patronage. She politely smiled and shook her head while making her way through the long narrow alley. Finally she got to the other side and inhaled the smell of fresh hot pumpkin juice and baked meat pies. This entrance held a restaurant where many of her friends had dragged her regardless of how expensive it was. After several moments of peace and quiet she heard a shrill scream followed by howls of laughter. She paused a moment before rounding the other side of the restaurant. There stood a crooked building painted yellow and bright green. The store's top was painted a bright red with tree branches from the sidewalk turned as red as the roof. The front door was amid two long windows on either side. The second floor of the building had one window open and another closed. It made it look like the building had a round head of red hair and was grinning and winking at her.

Susan looked at the sign on the building and instantly recognized the name.

"Weasley." She breathed out to herself. Susan walked up to the store ignoring many people's cautionary words. With a dainty hand, she pushed the door open and entered inside before the door closed tightly behind her. The room light fell to darkness in spite of the fact that the front entrance was nothing but glass.

A disembodied voice shouted. "Welcome dear customer who dares cross our threshold!" Susan nearly screamed out loud from the shout. "You have shown bravery, and even balls. No wait, you don't have a pair, here you go." Out of nowhere two steal balls fell to the ground in front of Susan almost making her scream out loud again. There was a pair of laughter now. "She is good." "Well how about this." the last of the light turned off and a cool breeze kicked up before the lights turned back on. Susan turned around and saw two red heads staring at her. Susan screamed before backing up and falling on her rear.

Both boys finally burst out laughing before one of them offered their hand to her. Susan took it and smiled. She first met these boys once

while they were setting up a prank when they went to Hogwarts. She was a second year at the time, but the image of their successful prank on McGonagall was one of her fondest memories of that year.

Susan inhaled deeply before calling out. "Hello Weasley brothers." There was a sudden gasp before one of them smiled at the other.

"Did she just lump us together as if we were the same, dear brother?" The left twin said distraughtly.

"I do believe she did." Said the second who walked past Susan. Susan wasn't sure who to keep an eye on. She had enough experience from their pranks to know that she should be careful. She stepped back a few feet and was able to see both of them. That earned a smile from the twins. "Alas, we two are misunderstood and no one truly understands the genius that is Fred."

"Nor do they appreciate the ingenuity that is George." Said the other dramatically. Susan smiled before looking at the one who spoke first.

"So George, do you two get a kick out of scaring your new clientele?" Both boys groaned.

"How did you know -er sorry, I don't remember your name. I think we practiced once with each other during DA." Susan smiled. It felt good to gain some confidence over these two.

"It's Susan. I know you are George because, you two never complement yourselves, only each other."

Both boys stared at each other. After a moment they burst out into gales of laughter. "Wait till mom hears this, I think Susan figured something out that mom never could." Fred bent over in tears. Susan grinned before joining in. It was good to laugh after mulling over Harry's disappearance.

Susan talked to them for the remainder of the day and well into an hour after the store closed. "Harry gave all of the money to you guys?"



Fred nodded. "It was enough to get a few patents on some potions. With the money from the circulated recipes we had enough money to buy and rebuild this shop. It's not much but we get plenty of time to work out our next projects."

Susan poured herself another cup of tea that she made herself. "That's nice of him..." Susan wondered why she was beating around the bush. She didn't think she was embarrassed. But she just couldn't come out and say she had been writing Harry, and ask if they had seen him.

"Susan, ask already. You had been having something on your mind for ages now." George grinned at the girl. Susan smiled slightly. It was easier to know who was George and Fred now. Especially since George had made a few passes at her since she sat with them.

"Actually, it's about Harry." She reddened.

Both boys looked interested. Susan sucked in some air and started her story how the two of them were writing to each other and then he just disappeared. How Tonks had said to her Aunt that Harry was fine, but there was no way for her to talk to him. Both twins shared a look. "Ron told us Hermione is off to some kind of muggle camp." Susan looked at the two skeptically. "Hey, that's what he said. I don't blimey know what he was going on about, just that he knew she was excited. The rest of the family is visiting Charlie in Romania. Actually the only people here in the country are us two and Bill. And I know neither of us have had a word on what happened to Harry."

Susan perked up slightly at the information about Bill. "Harry said Bill was watching over him a few times. Do you think you can send him a message to owl me?" Both twins nodded.

"Anything for a worthy prankster." "We'll have him send you an owl when we talk to him." "He is likely at work right now." Susan nodded at the two's interchangeable conversation before leaving. When Susan finally left, the boys both scratched their heads in unison. "I think Bill has" "More than one question to answer."

It was late in the afternoon past her usual dinner time. Just as Susan walked through the fire at the Leaky Cauldron, a thought passed by her. Most places close at sunset. What kind of job did Bill do that required him to work after hours?

-0-

Harry stared at the moon. It was late night. Dawn would not be for many more hours and the night was beginning to reflect the lack of sunlight by fogging up the glass window that extended the height of the tower. The window sill he sat on was a couch that matched one on the other side of the room. Harry hugged his legs under his chin. The teen had let his mind wander still trying to invoke a trance. He had results while playing with his magic now that he was trying to cast spells instead of avoid casting them. Harry knew he needed help. But he also knew that in this tower, he was alone. In the castle he was not the only soul, but he was the only living being. Harry let himself lean back against the window and felt the cold absorb through his body to his bone. Harry shivered and thought about what he wanted in life. As he was slowly nodding off he listed off names, goals and...

"Freedom." the murmur could not even be called a whisper, but to Harry it was as if he said it to someone across a loud room. The back of Harry's mind told him there was something moving next to him. Slowly pillows and various loose articles of clothe and marble began to change to the movement.

Harry's eyes slowly opened and he was not surprised to see that the glass he was leaning against was glowing from the torrent of flames that licked and clawed his surroundings. Harry looked at fire and knew this was a big one. He did not want to fight it. He did not want to control it. While he was nodding off, he knew just one thing. His flames were just as natural as the want for a good life.

The teens' head slowly sank down again. His body was already tired from the exhausting day, and it longed to rest. Harry smiled faintly while sleepy thoughts grazed over his mind about being natural. Slowly the fire died. The glass still radiated heat, and the wooden floor was just now slowly returning to the former wooden finish prior

to the fire. Harry let himself exhale while he began to sleep again. Even as his eyes fluttered closed, his thoughts returned to his future. The fire started to expand. Harry straitened his head slowly. His mind was now awake even if his body was not. He tried to keep the listless motion his mind had started on, and found he was succeeding. Harry raised his hand and felt pressure against it.

Fire filled the room and rings burning on the ceiling fell to the ground. The heat did not bother Harry. It was always the same, everything around him burns. Not him.

Fire fell into Harry's half opened hand. Slowly the fire faded. His mind was now fully awake. "Am I not reacting on my own feelings?" Harry slowly stood while still trying to keep himself in the thought inspired trance he had when he was nodding off, but was soon finding it harder and harder to accomplish as his body was waking up and his mind was screaming in excitement. "Will. That's all it was." Harry felt another burst of magic and his trance erupted through the room. Harry stared at the fire and could almost make out something moving in it. Harry walked through the flames enveloping the room but the mirage, if that was what it was, disappeared. Harry let his eyes close half way before walking through the blazing room. He trusted Dumbledore when the man said the room would not be damaged from this kind of fire. If that was true, Harry was going to take advantage of it and try to find his own answers.

"I am sick of waiting." The flames almost completely and abruptly stopped. Harry was now awake and screamed in frustration before the flames returned again. Harry opened his eyes at the sudden influx of magic that pressured his body. The trance suddenly felt like he was being pressed under hundreds of pounds of air. Harry fell to one knee. Urgency gripped Harry and the teen turned to the glass. "I can't wait! I need to do something now!" Panic, fear, anger, cut off his breathing. But with it Harry saw something else. He stared at the window as his vision tunneled. Harry saw his reflection. His face did not show anything he was feeling. Harry looked at his reflection and his reflection looked right at him with a look Harry once knew... Then when he felt he could take no more, a laugh escaped his mouth. Peace. It was something he had truly felt before now. Peace at knowing some thing's were inevitable. Harry closed his eyes and let

go of something he knew he had no control over. Something Harry could only recognize as a sound erupted before he knew anything else. The fire flashed through the room once before the door was illuminated with a piercing white light.

When Harry woke up, he felt like he could breathe. He had not noticed it before. But now it was as if there was a great presence over him that was absent. Harry let himself revel in the feeling before he stared at the ceiling. It was vaguely familiar but he knew it was not the ceiling in his personal room at Hogwarts. He let his head roll to the side and he wondered how he ended up in the infirmary. "Mr. Potter, it is good to see you awake. You gave the staff quite a scare this morning."

Harry looked at Madame Pomfrey before he groaned. "I would not recommend moving for a bit. Albus had Professor McGonagal and myself arrive at the castle a few weeks early not knowing why." She gave a huff before looking at the Potter. "I am not truly surprised that I was called to work. But I am surprised that it was because of an injury you sustained at Hogwarts. When Dumbledore showed you to me after he had healed some of your skin, I could have sworn you were dead." Pomfrey sniffed slightly before she gave another huff of irritation.

"Just stay in bed for the rest of the week and we can see about what you can do for your two remaining weeks before the other students arrive." Harry nodded before the woman left.

Harry let his thoughts swim not really sure what happened. He did have a few assurances now. The door opened and closed. But Harry did not want to attempt to look who had arrived. He was relieved when he saw white at the corner of his eyes. Albus sat next to the boy and humm'ed for a second.

"I am quite surprised at the condition I found you in Harry. Your body was burned." Harry closed his eyes thinking of the pain in his body. It only ached slightly. His eyes moved to Dumbledore's hat which was the only thing visible to him. "We have repaired the damage to your skin. But I am more concerned what we should do if your trances are getting worse."

Harry felt his body remain heavy but this time it was not from fatigue. His magic felt like it was voicing something to him now. Harry did not hear it before, but now it was like he knew what it wanted. "Professor. I don't think I am sick." Albus looked at the teen with out an expression. Harry exhaled before he said. "I think this is something that my magic is trying to express. I didn't notice it before, but now I can understand it. It's a loud instinct and it is telling me what it wanted."

"What is it asking of you Harry?"

Harry wondered at the feelings he felt. After a moment, "Right now, it is saying nothing. But before. It was telling me to focus on doing one thing..." Harry shook his head unsure what he was leading too. Albus raised his eyebrows again but let the thoughts of the boy wander.

"I would like to test you when you are healed. If what ever has happened to you has indeed passed, then we can worry about why it happened."

Harry let the man go unsure how, but in the middle of his stomach he felt the presence of his magic. It felt clearer to him. Like he had let his body be sifted like sand through a prospectors pan. It left nothing but something pure. Harry let that warm glow in him lull him to sleep.

-O-

Albus Dumbledore entered the room where Harry had lived in for the past week and felt he needed to rub his eye brow. He stepped over charred remains of what was once an enchanted fireproof floor. Harry's personal room was not consumed in the teens' fire but The foyer and the reception area were completely gone. Albus touched a scorched wall. It slowly crumbled under his hand. Albus felt a draft coming from outside and turned to where he found Harry laying unconscious. The crater cut a clean hole through the glass and stone leaving slag remains around the earth and mortar.

"I don't know what to do with you Harry. This is far more dangerous than what I thought it could be." Professor Dumbledore turned to several clanking footsteps and nodded to Bill.

"The goblins have graciously allowed me to come and help with the repairs to the disenchanted stone, but from what I saw from the Dursley house hold I am not sure there is much I can do." Albus Dumbledore nodded and started walking out of room. Bill followed and start to list off what needed to be rebuilt.

"I was looking into it while you were gone. The wards are still holding strong over the castle, but the recent enchantments were obliterated. The enchantments within the castle are damaged though." Bill took out his wand and touched the wall with it. After a few murmured words, Bill looked to the headmaster. "From what the curse breakers that came with me saw, the castle itself has already cut off this section of the castle with the rest. Erin had gone inside and tried to find the entrance to this area through the castle and found nothing but solid walls instead of the three buttressed room to these study quarters." Bill pointed to his left while remembering something.

Dumbledore smiled kindly at the young man. "Thank you Bill, that will be all for the briefing, I trust you to complete the job with as much care and detail as possible. If you excuse me, I will need prepare the school for the incoming students for the semester." Bill nodded before going back to the next room. Albus stood silent while looking over the damaged quarters.

With steady feet, Albus navigated through the last of the debris before finding what he was looking for. After a moment of thought Albus took the diary from the boy's chest along with the extra clothes Harry needed now that his were destroyed. Albus smiled at the journal and kept walking out the doors and around the court yard to the entrance. If Harry believes he can solve his problem, I will have to trust him. Not trusting myself led to Sirius' death. Perhaps trusting in him can save others who may be near by when he has his next trance.

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"That is all we found Tom. The guardians you were talking about are not a part of any of the department of Mysteries archives. Tenen and I have found one thing of interest." Tom nodded. "There is a book in

the archive room. It had no identification number, but it did have the Slytherin name etched in a small label below it. I tried to take it but was not able to touch it. When I forced my self to actually touch the damn book I was rewarded with a numb arm and a illness that took a day to clear." Anath said in one breath.

Tom nodded in understanding. "That is what you took so long." The group nodded solemnly. "It is no matter, but this information you gave me is truly invaluable." Tom slicked his hair back while smiling at the four teenagers. The impromptu pub meeting was coming to an end and Tom knew it was time to address the reason why he was there. Tom was thoroughly impressed with the youth he found in Poland. Each one of them had lived in a muggle house hold underdeveloped and unappreciated for the power they wielded. "That was the fifth job you have completed. I am very proud of you four." The four young adults grinned in satisfaction. Each of the lads were from families who were denied their true heritage one way or another, and as a result they had to learn of the magical world on their own. Tom found each one at the height of human cruelty and saved them. It was much like he did with his Death Eaters. Now his experience was telling him it was time to extend the same hospitality.

"We are glad you were happy with it. Is there was anything else we can do for you Tom?"

Tom gave a charming smile. "I was actually going to ask if there was anything I can do for the four of you. You have all worked hard, and I know you deserve more than just simple credit."

Orrick looked at his friends. Tom knew this young man had the hardest among the group. As a ten year old the boy had to kill his family in order to live. When the village discovered this he had to kill or be killed. Tom found this one among trash and stealing openly while using his innate magic to pass by law enforcement when the boy was wanted for the slaughter of seventeen people. "You gave us our names, our lives, and a way of life." He laughed easily before saying, "Just keep giving us opportunities to prove ourselves. You gave us a way to live. Its more than what we could have asked for."

Tom looked at all four of their loyal faces and smiled. "How would you like it if I gave you more than just a direction. If I gave you a purpose in life, would you take it?"

Tennen was a boy Tom had found in the moors after his family left him to the wolves to save their flock. When the boy killed the wolves with his bare hands, his family called him a demon and exiled the boy from the family. "You have never been wrong before Tom. We don't believe you will guide us wrong now." Tennen answered for the four. Each nodded their agreement.

Tom stood and gave a genuine smile. "Take my hand. I will show you where you can form your new life."

Immediately they reached for his hand. The five were port keyed to a chamber room. A throne stood at the far end. The room was brightly lit and draped in forest green. "Before I give you your purpose, I must make a confession. I will understand if you all decide to back out. But if you will not accept my direction after I come clean, will you all at least be willing to consider helping me as you have done before?" The four teenagers nodded. Tom let the illusion that had spelled over his body fade away. In his place of the dark brown haired man was a bald, brow less man with cold calculating eyes and slit nose. "I am Lord Voldemort. Will you still be willing to join me and allow me to give you a purpose in life?"

The boys bowed. Julius said it before the others, "Anything you wish for will be done Tom." Tom remembered finding this one. As a son of a pure blood, he was thought to be a squib. When the child was sent to a muggle orphanage at the age of five, the boy was raised knowing he was a failure as a wizard. When the boy turned twelve, he found he could indeed perform magic. But it was not the traditional magic he had an affinity to. Tom smiled at the controlled puppets the boy created out of the teachers and had wished he too could have performed such a feat as a child.

"Kneel and extend your left arm." Voldemort touched each teens arm with his hand. The smell of burnt flesh started when Voldemort's hand left each arm. The spell cast on each arm snaked around their arm before settling on the inside of their forearm.



"I, Orrick pledge my loyalty and undying devotion to my Lord, Voldemort." The brown haired youth grinned at his new master.

"I, Tenen, pledge my loyalty and unwavering spirit to my Lord, Voldemort." The black haired teen with gray eyes stared at his master.

"I, Julius, pledge my loyalty and unbreakable body to my Lord, Voldemort." The blonde man chuckled slightly giddy after glancing at his new tattoo.

"I, Anath, pledge my loyalty and undivided mind to my Lord, Voldemort." The last teen smiled at his friend before losing it again and bowing his head slightly to his new lord. Tom felt his insides smile at this one. By far his favorite of the four children, Tom saw this boys past as the most tragic. His pureblooded family lived among a village. In the village as well as among their own kind the family was respected and cherished. But when the villagers in the muggle town found that the family could perform things that were deemed unnatural, the mansion was burnt to the ground with the boys family in it. The boy survived only by accidental magic that protected him from the fire. When the villagers found the boy, the mob was going to lynch him in his own bedroom. Tom had his then current body, Quirell intervene and took the boy from the deep forests to the north where Tom had found Tennen.

"Thank you for your pledges." The four each raised their arm looking at their leader with admiration. Tom smiled and said almost apologetically. "I should have warned you of the pain involved but I thought it would be easier if you had not known."

The four were silent when the spell burned their skin. Julius spoke first. "The pain you saved us from was greater than this. Such a short bit of pain is nothing my lord."

"Well said Julius. Rise. All of you. Be welcomed to my death eaters." With that the doors opened revealing thirty other death eaters who walked quickly around their master to form their circle. Peter Pettigrew moved forward when Voldemort nodded to him. "My Death Eaters, you have gathered to bear witness to the induction of these

new Death Eaters and to witness my own commitment to our cause.” Peter pulled out a bundle of cloth. Voldemort took the cloth and unwrapped the knife that was hidden inside. “As Wormtail had shown out of an act of self preservation , so will I. I cannot allow this chance for more knowledge of the Slytherin family to be passed.” Voldemort extended his left arm and moved the knife in his right to it. With a grip of determination, Voldemort cut through his hand pausing only a fraction of a second to sever through the bone of his forearm. The half arm and hand fell to the floor while Tom kept his eyes closed for a moment. After a gasp he cast a spell over the stub then picked up his own severed arm. He stared at it in morbid fascination before the hand gripped on its own. Voldemort looked at the stump of a left arm and saw the muscles through his pale skin as he commanded his now absent hand to grip. When his gaze returned to the left hand it gripped just as if it was still connected.

Voldemort smiled. “For this mission, as it truly is a mission now, I need Tenen, Andrew Nott and hmmm...” Tom paused for a moment before turning over to Peter. “Peter, you will lead this group to the department of Ministries.” Peter nodded. His pale face took in the news before he started to walk out of the room. Voldemort nodded his encouragement to Peter. He was the first and likely now the last person to be recruited through one of his marks rather than himself. It had been a mistake to rely on his marks to recruit others to their circle of twenty. Each one Voldemort saw that was recruited by his marks, was never as devoted, easy to give up and quick to die. Voldemort disregarded his thoughts of Wormtail, and turned to Tenen. “As one of the newest of my death marks, you will have the most important role.” Voldemort extended his hand to the teens. Tenen took the severed hand and placed it in a bag at the teen’s hip. “Like a Prophecy, the book likely can only be removed by those who were named in it. Tenen, I am the heir of Slytherin use my hand to remove the book.” The black haired teen nodded. When Nott started to leave Tenen followed. Voldemort called out to him. “Tenen return for a moment.” The teenager turned around and stood before his leader. Voldemort looked at his thumb before the nail extended and sharpened. He moved his nail to his marks’ forehead and scraped a jagged scar. Tenen did not flinch at the scratch. When Voldemort removed his hand from the boy eyes, they changed from pale blue to solid green. Tenen stared at his master.

Tom smiled at the passing resemblance. "This is to keep you safe while you enter the Ministry again. But it will also serve another purpose." Tenen nodded before following his group out the door. Voldemort turned to his other Death Eaters. "You are all dismissed. We will wait until their success before we make another move." When the group left Rudolphus and Bellatrix remained.

Rudolphus smirked at the bloodied stump. "That was found in the scroll that Falden brought back wasn't it?"

Tom smiled at the bloodied arm. "It is. The magic in that scroll alone is amazing once I understood it. But the book will be beyond what I can desecrate. A true book of the dead." Voldemort gave a amused chuckle at his arm before retiring to his quarters.

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Harry stirred from his sleep from a long string of stifled giggles. The teen was almost afraid to open his eyes as he recognized the voice. "What is it Peeves?"

"Peeves was saddened and over joyed when more of the fleshies came back to the castle. But when I see you here with burns." The poltergeist hummed for a moment. "That means no pranks on you?"

Harry let himself relax. "Not if you want me to get better." The spirit huffed, then chuckled.

"Your prank was brilliant! I never seen the fuddy duddy beard one so upset!" Peeves laughed while looking at the bed ridden student.

"About what?"

Peeves snickered. "Your room of course! Never in my time in Hogwarts could I have made Fuddy Duddy run so fast!" Peeves burst into all out laughter.

Harry leaned back in his chair trying to remember what happened. His mind ached for a moment before he had a flash of a memory. After trying again he could remember the fire beginning to burn him. Harry flinched at the memory before he remembered the room began to burn like he was. As if the fire was greater than any magic. Harry smiled at Peeves before turning to the ceiling. "Don't worry about my recovery Peeves, I will be good as new soon, and then the other students will be coming in soon too." The thought brought back the memory of his friends and then Susan. He grinned inwardly thinking it would be good to see her after writing for her for what seemed like years. The reunion would definitely be that of long lost friends. Harry sighed at the thought before dozing off.

Peeves watched the teen for a moment before he wandered through the castle still disappointed that he lost a potential playmate. He roamed the castle and decided to talk to his old friend. After much rising through the ceilings of the castle he stopped in a grand room with several stain glass pictures. They all smiled at waved at the poltergeist. "Well if it isn't Peeves."

"Hey glass man. Did you hear of fuddy-duddy's midnight run?" The ghosts joy returned after the thought of Dumbledore's reaction to Harry's hilarious prank.

"I have one up on you this time cackles. I felt it."

The ghost looked at the glass picture. The picture moved forward closer to Peeves and smiled at him. "I am not a painting Peeves. I am as part of the castle as the stone walls. What ever happened gave us quite a start."

After a moment of thinking about it he knew Harry was his new best friend. Between fits of laughter, Peeves managed to get out. "He got you guys and he didn't even know you! Oooh I have been thinking of things to get you guys for years! And he beats me to it before even meeting you!"

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A/N: Yeah I really should have posted this sooner, but work had been all consuming these past few weeks. and its not even a real job just the old summer one that i did last year. is still looking for a new one I don't know why, but i think i was in a funny mood when i wrote the majority of this chapter. The tone changes a lot but i needed to get both sides of the story in here. And Peeves is one of the most under used characters in Harry fandoms far as i am concerned. No one imbues the connection between life and death as much as Peeves who seems to live for everyone who is dead at the castle. And who to guide Harry better in living his life better than a poltergeist who can touch both worlds. Ghosts can't by the way.